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Social Work Professionals' Strategies to Reduce Employee Turnover

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Jamilla Jenkins Nelson

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Walden University
2019

Abstract

Social Work Professionals' Strategies to Reduce Employee Turnover

by

Jamilla Jenkins Nelson

MA, Liberty University, 2014

BS, Limestone College, 2012

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

March 2019

Abstract

Some social work leaders in the United States lack strategies to successfully reduce employee turnover, which is detrimental to the profitability of an organization. The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore effective strategies that social work professionals used to reduce employee turnover. The targeted population included 10 social work managers from organizations in South Carolina who experienced employee turnover and implemented successful strategies to overcome it. The conceptual framework was Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory. Triangulation was used to increase the reliability and validity of the data. Data were collected from semistructured in-depth interviews with managers who spent at least 1 year in a managerial position at a social work agency and a review of agency documents. Three themes emerged from the data analysis: job satisfaction was key to reducing employee turnover, positive working environment, and management. Reducing employee turnover contributes to social change by providing social work leaders with valuable insight that can lead to improved organizational growth, increased profitability, and enhanced sustainability, which might promote prosperity for local families and the community.

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Dedication

I have been truly humble through the process; I thank God for giving me the strength to conquer all of the adversities that I encountered along the way. To my family that encouraged and supported me along the way, thank you. To my children, Jiaé and Jayden, this is evidence that you can do whatever it is that you put your mind to do in life. To my mother, Georgetta, thank you for filling in the gaps when I was not able to and being my biggest supporter and believing in me.

The race is not given to the swift and the strong but to the one that endures to the end.

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To my chair and mentor, Dr. Gergana Velkova, I greatly appreciate your patience, kind words, and most of all your expectations to provide the best work possible. Your commitment and expertise pushed me to do more. I extend my thanks to all of the committee members and the Walden University doctoral program for your guidance and valuable feedback.

I extend my gratitude to all of my extended family members who have been just as excited as I am for me to finish the process. I also would like to thank my colleagues who encourage me and was quite understanding during this process. Finally, I would like to thank everyone who provided prayers and support to me throughout my journey.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The purpose of this study was to obtain data to explore effective strategies that social work leaders use to reduce employee turnover. Employee turnover is problematic for many agencies; with high levels of turnover agencies experience increased financial losses related to recruiting, selecting, and training new staff and the potential to lose remaining employees (Wareham, Smith, & Lambert, 2013). Turnover is a significant issue that negatively impacts an organization's overall performance (Markarius, Stevens, & Tenhiala, 2017). The cost incurred from replacing a worker can equate to the yearly salary of an employee (Boros & Curseu, 2013). Employees voluntarily leave organizations for a variety of reasons, including low job satisfaction, limited promotion and growth opportunities, a better opportunity elsewhere, or disapproval of organizational changes or restructuring (Heavey, Holwerda, & Hausknecht, 2013).

Managing employee turnover in the social work profession is important to negate negative outcomes of services that directly impact the quality of life for clients (Tremblay, Haines, & Joly, 2016). In the United States, voluntary employee turnover rates in social work professionals are estimated nationally to range between 30% and 40% (Boyas, Wind, & Ruiz, 2013). Based on the existing problems faced by social work professionals, further exploration of effective strategies used by social work leaders to reduce turnover might lead to an increased understanding of the issue and help other managers effectively and efficiently implement strategies that address employee retention, empowerment, and engagement.

Background of the Problem

Research on turnover indicates costly problems for organizations, with severe consequences for individuals (Ritter et al., 2014). With high turnover, many organizations pay a substantial cost of replacement of employees as a negative result (Saeed et al., 2014). Turnover intention is a potential threat to the organization because it has both direct and indirect cost implications (Rubel et al., 2017). Departing employees take away the knowledge and wisdom gained from experiences in the organization, resulting in huge costs for the repetition of induction and training of new employees as replacements (Rubel et al., 2017). High staff turnover can have unfortunate consequences for organizations, especially in terms of their sustainability (Tremblay et al., 2016).

Kashyap and Rangnekar (2016) argued that leaders should focus on strategies that target recruitment and retention to reduce employee turnover. Leadership strategies are beneficial when gauging turnover intentions, the impact of effects on existing human resource programs, employees' intent of leaving, the factors that lead to turnover, and the organizational cost associated with the loss of talent (Caillier, 2016). Gupta and Sharma (2016) contended that retention and engagement is a continuous process and when successful, it produces desirable outcomes such as profitability, productivity, and satisfaction.

Problem Statement

Between June 2014 and August 2015, 2.7 million employees quit in the United States (Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2015). The cost associated with losing and replacing an employee can exceed 100% of their yearly salary (Bryant & Allen, 2013). The general business problem is employee turnover can affect the profitability of an organization. The specific business problem is that some social work leaders lack strategies to reduce employee turnover.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore effective strategies that social work leaders use to reduce employee turnover. The targeted population included 10 social work managers from organizations in South Carolina who experienced employee turnover and implemented successful strategies to reduce it. The implications of positive social change include the potential to enrich leaders' understanding of effective strategies to strengthen employee engagement, promoting organizational success and growth, which may lead to new employment opportunities and engagement with families in the local communities.

Nature of the Study

I used a qualitative method for this research study. A qualitative method is used when the researcher designs a study and collects, analyzes, and interprets data to build a new theory or draw on existing theory (Choy, 2014). Qualitative researchers support the idea and usefulness of understanding a problem with interrogative strategies through in-

depth research (Barnham, 2015). Employing a quantitative research method entails developing knowledge gathered through the usage of logical and mathematical information (Smith, 2014). Researchers use quantitative approaches to analyze statistical data and test hypotheses (Vaitkevicius & Kazokiene, 2013). The quantitative approach was not appropriate for this study because my goal was not to test a hypothesis or theory. Conducting mixed method study involves incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). The mixed method was not suitable for this study, because of the quantitative component it contains.

Using a single qualitative case study approach enables researchers to understand the problem that is being investigated (Dasgupta, 2015). In a case study design, the researcher conducts firsthand exploration through an examination of a current phenomenon within its real-world context (Yin, 2014). Ethnographic research involves long-term engagement with participants within a setting, site, or institution to observe or record behavior in its natural setting (Atenio, 2009). This design was not appropriate for this study. Researchers who conduct a phenomenological research attempt to uncover the world from the view of the participant's experiences and interpretations (Barnham, 2015), which was not the intent of this study. The goal of my study was to explore strategies leaders use to reduce turnover in social work professionals. A case study was the most suitable design for this study because using it enabled me to gain an in-depth understanding of strategies that leaders in the social work industry use to reduce employee turnover.

Research Question

What strategies do social work leaders use to reduce employee turnover?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies do you use to retain social work professionals?
2. How did employees respond to these strategies?
3. Which of these strategies were most effective in reducing turnover for social work professionals?
4. How do you assess the effectiveness of the strategies for reducing employee turnover?
5. What barriers did you encounter in implementing the strategies for reducing employee turnover?
6. How did you address the barriers to the implementation of strategies for reducing employee turnover?
7. What additional information do you have that could address strategies that could promote future success?

Conceptual Framework

The theory that I used as the conceptual framework for this study was the motivation-hygiene theory. In 1959, Herzberg (1959) developed the motivation-hygiene theory. Researchers use the motivation-hygiene theory to offer an explanation on factors that motivate job satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Soliman, 1970). According to Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, employee motivation is derived from intrinsic factors, which are satisfiers, and extrinsic factors, such as dissatisfiers, in which both

influence employee turnover intentions. Smith and Shields (2013) proposed that job satisfaction is a predictor of intent of turnover as well as actual turnover. Herzberg identified the following key constructs for satisfiers that are motivators for an employee: (a) achievements, (b) advancement, (c) recognition, and (d) responsibility (Brenner, Carmack, & Weinstein, 1971). Herzberg also identified the following constructs for job dissatisfiers: (a) policies and interpersonal relationships, (b) salary, (c) technical competence, and (d) working conditions as hygiene factors (Brenner et al., 1971).

The motivation-hygiene theory provided me with a possible lens through which I could understand effective strategies that social worker leaders use to reduce turnover. Recent literature suggested that perception regarding organization support and work engagement affect turnover intentions, in which employees who have a positive outlook on their job are more likely to remain with the organization while those who express negative emotions are more likely to engage in turnover (Shantz, Alfes, & Latham, 2016). Some researchers have used the motivation-hygiene theory to understand how leadership behaviors play a major role in the job satisfaction of social work professionals (Smith & Shields, 2013). As applied in this study, the motivation-hygiene theory enabled the understanding of strategies that leaders use to deal with employee turnover among social work professionals.

Operational Definitions

The following operational terms provide understanding and clarity for readers and appear throughout this study:

Disruption: A change in collective performance caused when an employee leaves the organization (Hale, Ployhart, & Shepherd, 2016).

Employee turnover: A diametrical change, exchange, or major loss of staff members (Grzenda & Buczynski, 2015).

Employee retention: Initiatives taken to keep employees from leaving an organization (Al-Emadi, Schwabenland, & Qi, 2015).

Job satisfaction: Organization members' view about their working environment condition and conditions, and if they feel satisfied or not satisfied with the conditions will affect their behavior at work (Sawitri, Suswati, & Huda, 2016).

Leadership: A power, value-based, and ethically driven relationship between leaders and followers (Anon, 2013).

Leadership style: The way in which the functions of leadership are carried out and the method that a manager chooses to behave towards employees (Wakabi, 2016).

Organizational commitment: An employee who identifies with an organization and its goals and wishes to maintain membership in the organization (Sawitri et al., 2016).

Turnover intention: A mental or behavioral action on the behalf of an employee to get out of their job within a year (Lambert et al., 2012).

Voluntary turnover: When the employee quits, and involuntary turnover occurs when the employee is forced to leave (Lambert et al., 2012).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are fundamental concepts that have not been verified (Mertens, 2016). Assumptions influence the formulation and implementation of strategies that shape the collection and interpretation of information that shape the collection process, generation of solution alternatives, and the choice of final solutions (Baer, Dirks, & Nickerson, 2013). I made three assumptions for this study. The first assumption was that the participants would provide truthful responses to interview questions. Another assumption was that using a qualitative case study approach would be the best research design. My final assumption was that employee turnover among social work professionals is still an important topic, particularly in South Carolina.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses of qualitative research that are a time-consuming process that is subjective to the researcher's interpretations (Choy, 2014). The first limitation of this study was that the information obtained was limited to leaders in the social work profession. Another limitation was that participants may not have fully disclosed relevant information based on their perceptions of turnover and their relationship with the organization. The third limitation was the potential for bias in the research method. Every study has confounding variables or limitations; therefore, researchers must be aware of potential sources and agree to take actions to reduce and minimize any deviations from the truth (Simundic, 2013).

Delimitations

Delimitations are those specific choices of the researcher that include the interpretation of boundaries from the researchers' own perspectives (Holmes, 2013). The first delimitation for this research was the geographic location. Participants were from a specific county in South Carolina. Another delimitation was that I only interviewed leaders that had direct involvement with social work professionals and employee turnover. The final delimitation was that I only used one organization that had direct involvement with social workers.

Significance of the Study

The negative effects of turnover affect both leaders and employees. Addressing employee turnover is necessary for many organizations because finding employee replacements and dealing with hidden organizational costs can be extremely challenging (Al-Emadi et al., 2015). The direct cost of recruiting and training new hires ranges from 25% to 500% of an employees' salary (Ballinger et al., 2011). Knowledge on leadership perspectives could assist in reducing employee turnover among social work professionals.

Contribution to Business Practice

The study was important for understanding the influences of employee turnover intentions in social work professionals. Reducing employee turnover can mitigate negative effects on organizational performance from the loss of human and social capital (Soltis, Agneessens, Sasovova, & Labianca, 2013). The turnover rate for social work professionals averages around 30% annually (Lambert et al., 2012). In addition,

high employee turnover can affect both management and coworkers; staffing shortages create increased workload, reduced employee morale, and increased use of management time and resources (Lambert et al., 2012). Creating cost-effective strategies that focus on employee turnover could increase engagement, decrease turnover, and assist leaders with increasing business practices that will provide expansion and sustainability (Smith & Macko, 2014). The findings from this study could provide insight into how leaders effectively practice job enrichment. The results of this study can assist leaders in determining ways to improve employee satisfaction in the work place.

Implications for Social Change

Studies on employee turnover in social work have become a focal point for agencies (Schweitzer, Chianello, & Kothari, 2013). Social work leaders can utilize information and data pertaining to employee turnover to strengthen their commitment to working not just with, but on behalf of, others (National Association for Social Workers, 2009). In return, building positive relationships among social work professionals may provide organizations with the ability to invest time and service into supporting families, building economic opportunities, and changing lives within local communities.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Employee turnover of existing employees is a leading concern in many organizations (Boros, 2013). Any organization may suffer from employee-initiated turnover (Jun-Chen, 2015). Increased turnover points toward negative relationships between employees and the organization (Surienty, Ramayah, Lo, & Tarmizi, 2014). The loss of competent employees that possess skills or motivation interrupts the ability for

companies to operate smoothly (Jen-Chen, 2015). Identifying factors that contribute to employee turnover may help leaders address turnover intention to determine the reasons why employees leave (Junchao et al., 2016). Exploring effective strategies for reducing turnover may lead to both increased productivity and organizational commitment (Boros, 2013).

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory provided me with a lens through which to study the relationship between employee job satisfaction and turnover. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore effective strategies that social work leaders use to reduce employee turnover. Armstrong, Hartje, and Evans (2014) reasoned that turnover in social service organizations could have an adverse impact on the working environment.

This literature review will begin with a discussion of the conceptual framework of Herzberg's motivation theory and how it supports my topic of the perspective on effective strategies social work leaders used to reduce turnover. I also presented a review of related literature that includes factors to employee turnover in the social work profession. The review will end with a summary of different strategies that leaders may implement to help reduce high turnover rates.

My literature search involved a selection of source journals that provided a broad spectrum from which to obtain works, as recommended by Blobaum (2013). My objective was to identify factors that impact turnover intentions while determining perceived strategies to combat turnover. The primary search engines for my literature review were the Walden Library and Google Scholar. I located published literature by

using the EBSCOhost, Social Work Index, Academic Complete, ProQuest, and SAGE Journals databases. The keywords used in my research were *turnover*, *social work professionals*, *leadership*, *organizational commitment*, and *voluntary turnover*. The literature review included multiple sources such as peer-reviewed articles, books, and government websites. At least 85% of the information gathered came from full-length, peer reviewed journal articles published during the 5 year period of 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018. Many of the research articles are related to businesses within the United States; source journals most often originate in the United States and are the United States focused (Blobaum, 2013).

Herzberg Motivation-Hygiene Theory

The theory I applied to support this study was Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory. Herzberg et al. (1959) collected data from 200 engineers to explore the motivating factors that caused them to be either satisfied or dissatisfied with their employment. The information provided from their study revealed techniques and practices for industry leaders to increase productivity and efficiency in employees' job performance. Hertzberg et al. contended that elements causing positive job attitudes were different from those factors attributed to negative attitudes. The complexities of employee job satisfaction and dissatisfaction still exist today in the 21st century.

Herzberg's (1966) view on motivation and hygiene sought to expand on earlier work by adding distinguishing factors that would reduce employees becoming psychologically withdrawn from the job, which could ultimately increase the success of business operations. Herzberg argued that both motivation and hygiene factors affect

employee satisfaction. According to Herzberg's theory, employee motivation developed from intrinsic factors, which are satisfiers that lead to improved productivity among employees. Herzberg et al. (1959) argued that motivating factors are those that can affect whether the employee's job attitude is positive or negative and could influence employees to perform exceptionally. According to Herzberg's theory, intrinsic factors contribute to job satisfaction in employees related to the nature of the job tasks themselves (Ho et al., 2016). Job satisfaction and job attractiveness are two of the more complex challenges managers are facing (Slimane, 2017). Herzberg maintained when employee satisfaction is high, dissatisfaction is lessened, which reduces poor performance. Job satisfaction serves as a stimulus to job performance and encourages employees to extend their efforts beyond their assigned workload (Lee, 2017). Deepak (2016) maintained for an organization to be successful and achieve its corporate objectives it is imperative that its employees are satisfied. Job satisfaction is considered an immediate antecedent to an individual's intention to leave (Fernandez, Sawchuk, & Grenier, 2017). Herzberg identified some examples of motivational factors as achievements, advancement, and recognition.

Herzberg (1966) maintained employees that had high levels of achievement developed intrinsic value, which created enthusiasm, encouraged them to take challenging task, and showed readiness to achieve maximum outcomes. Herzberg et al. (1959) concluded that employee growth and advancements provided security which positively impacts management through retention. According to Herzberg, recognition was also an effective means of motivation in which management expressed how

employee contributions are valued. According to Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, favorable attitudes towards employee achievement, advancement, and recognition satisfied employees' self-actualization needs.

Hygiene factors that surround job performance include salary, competencies, and working conditions, and Herzberg (1966) recognized them as extrinsic factors that were dissatisfiers which account for relationships that result in poor performance and low morale in the environment in which employees perform their task. Herzberg et al. (1959) argued that hygiene factors also provide significance by influencing employees' psychological needs. Glicken and Robinson (2013) contended that job dissatisfaction impacts work effectiveness and often disrupts the personal lives of workers. Job dissatisfaction is a recognized unpleasant state that leads to changes in employee behavior at work and leads to some employees, but not all, searching for and finding another job (Huyse-Gaytandjieva, Groot, & Pavlova, 2013). Walk et al. (2013) identified job dissatisfaction as the single most reliable forecaster of employee turnover, which damagingly affects organizational performance. According to Herzberg, dissatisfaction in salary influences employees' turnover intentions. Yang, Treadway, and Stepina (2013) reasoned that compensation affects attitudes and behaviors because employees who are dissatisfied with their salaries usually performed poorly. Bryant and Allen (2013) argued that people quit because they are unhappy with their pay and often quit to take higher paying jobs elsewhere.

Employee perceptions of pay fairness and equity are significant in managing employee commitment and turnover (Bryant & Allen, 2013). Leip, Stinchcomb, and

Schiff (2017) contended that it is important that employees estimate that the value of their compensation package is equitably matched to their perceived self-worth. Tran (2016) indicated that dissatisfaction with wages was the most important reason for voluntarily resignation from a broad range of occupations, in which pay satisfaction was also found to be related to turnover intentions. Herzberg (1966) found that through the measurement of morale, investigators could explore what employees sought to get out of their current position. Employees' performance and motivation are linked with both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that impact employee turnover intention (Sajjad, Ghazanfar, & Ramzan, 2013).

As a psychologist, Herzberg (1966) argued simply satisfying hygiene factors was not enough to cultivate performance. Herzberg maintained job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are comparable. According to the Herzberg's theory, an employee's attitude impact their job performance based on how they viewed different elements (Herzberg et al., 1959). Herzberg et al. (1959) investigated job attitudes as a useful approach in uncovering and investigating an employee's overall morale and job satisfaction. The authors concluded that unfavorable judgements about supervision influenced weaker job performance, while relationships with leadership enhanced job satisfaction and lowered turnover intentions. I used this theory to understand turnover in social work organizations.

Herzberg's (1966) approach provided a viewpoint through which to assess possible solutions to turnover. Improvement of factors that influence employee turnover and prevention of factors that lead to turnover are separate conceptions just as satisfaction

and dissatisfaction are separate concepts. Ghazi et al. (2013) used Herzberg's theory to examine university teacher's attitudes towards job satisfaction and work. The researchers found that hygiene factors are a source of job satisfaction and concluded that motivation was dependent on both fulfillment of hygiene and motivational factors. Slimane (2017) conducted a study among 71 pharmacists and 19 managers to draw attention to management highlighting the factors that influenced both motivation and job satisfaction. Slimane examined the impact of salary, promotion, and recognition and job satisfaction and the findings indicated that by using these factors leaders can work to eliminate dissatisfaction and enhance the satisfaction effect to reduce turnover.

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory was fundamentally different from other models developed to address turnover. Herzberg (1959) discharged the notion that money or salary is the primary source of job satisfaction. Instead, Herzberg proposed that recognizing motivators can potentially results in higher productivity, better quality, better attendance, and punctuality, which lowers labor turnover. Yang et al. (2013) stated that employees that are not satisfied with their supervisors are less likely to commit to the company. Teoh et al. (2016) also noted that people leave managers not organizations. Chang (2014) argued that organizational commitment is a major contributor to employees' organizational behavior, which is closely associated with employees' attendance, resignation, and performance. Jena (2014) maintained negative attitudes towards job tasks and supervision can produce low organizational commitment in which poor morale can be a cancer that slowly spreads and destroys the commitment of even those who are role models in an organization. Herzberg claimed that the theory provides

for understanding factors that relate to turnover decisions across many different professions that have been applied for decades in different research efforts (Samuel & Chipunza, 2009).

An efficient workplace is believed to produce higher quality products and services, support more innovation, attract more talented people, experience less resistance to change, and reduce turnover costs, all of which translate directly into a better bottom line (Joo & Lim, 2013). The most effectual supervision facilitates the effective accomplishment of work while maintaining employee satisfaction with the supervisor and the organization (Mikkelsen, Sloan, & Hesse, 2017). Understanding how to strategically use appropriate leadership is essential for organizational success; leaders who promote informal communication with their subordinates are more likely to induce positive attitudes from them (Kelly & MacDonald, 2016). Employees' trust in their leadership is widely acknowledged as a critical determinant of organizational effectiveness (Yasir et al., 2016).

Although Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory is regarded as a widely accepted over diverse populations, some researchers have identified limitations of the theory (Yusoff, Kian, & Idris, 2013). One of the criticisms of the motivation-hygiene theory is that Herzberg identified specific things that would contribute to satisfaction and dissatisfaction and that such a split can create confusion between the agent and the event (Yusoff et al., 2013). Ho et al. (2016) argued both intrinsic and extrinsic factors are dependent on an individual's life stage, because a person's vocational preference changes with time and experience.

Another criticism of the motivation-hygiene theory is that generational changes are not accounted for, such as full-time working millennials have different intrinsic motivators than extrinsic ones (Kultalahti & Liisa Viitala, 2014). Kultalahti and Liisa Viitala (2014) maintained that varying and flexible jobs and good relationships with colleagues and supervisors are more important for the current generation. Despite the criticism, leaders a half century later still use Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory to ascertain what satisfies or dissatisfies their workforce to introduce new programs that nurture job satisfaction and to minimize job dissatisfaction to bring forth higher productivity, increase retention, and reduce turnover or its intentions (Malik & Naeem, 2013).

Supporting and Contrasting Theories

In addition to Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, researchers have used other theories to explore the effects of employee turnover. To provide a comprehensive analysis, in the following subsection, I will present additional theories to explain factors that influence turnover intentions: social exchange theory (SET), Vroom theory, transformational leadership theory, and transactional leadership theory. My intent with providing this information was to address influences that impact turnover.

Social exchange theory (SET). Another important theory used in research to help explain turnover is the SET. Blau (1964) was the first to use SET, which expounds on social interactions. SET helps explain social behavior where interpersonal exchanges influence decision making; individuals choose the option that provides the apparent highest overall benefit given their preferences and limitations (Corcoran, 2013). SET

refers to the transfer of intangible resources with symbolic benefits, such as love, respect, knowledge, information, status, honor, and friendship, and in this context, interdependence is critical to sustaining a good social exchange relationship (Chang et al., 2015). Blau's SET proposes that behavior is the result of an exchange process or a series of transactions between two parties. The social exchange process also applies to organizations and their employees as the social exchange relationships between the employees and their organizations assume that managerial inducements under conditions of high leadership should encourage, stimulate, and draw out employees' creativity (Min, Ugaddan, & Park, 2017).

Wan (2016) contended the SET put forward relationships between individuals are connected based on their pursuit of rewards and benefits and the avoidance of cost and punishment. Studies showed that interpersonal exchanges influence individual behavior, and under the SET, meaningful social experiences can improve satisfaction levels that assist leaders in retaining social work professionals (Cook, Cheshire, Rice, & Nakagawa, 2013). According to Hsieh (2016), if relationships are rewarding leaders can increase employees' productive behaviors by increasing social exchange and, in turn, improve staff satisfaction. Kashyap and Rangnekar (2016) put forward that employees that are rewarded in return reciprocate the exchange by developing trust and commitment towards the organizations.

Studies have shown that close, meaningful relationships can impact both employee perceptions and outcomes. Huang et al. (2016) conducted a study using SET in which job satisfaction was used as an indicator to evaluate employee perceptions on

safety, engagement, and turnover intentions. Huang et al. surveyed 6,207 truck drivers from various trucking companies pertaining to turnover rates over the course of 1 year. The results from the study showed that employees' perception of safety impacted their job satisfaction, engagement, and objective turnover rate, thus supporting the application of SET. Job satisfaction was also a significant cause between safety climate and the two human resource outcomes to include employee engagement and turnover rate (Huang et al., 2016).

SET perspective has also been applied to examine the benefits of human resource systems and organizational performance (Wan & Antonucci, 2016). Wan and Antonucci (2016) argued organizations implement various systems, such as performance appraisal, development programs, innovation opportunities, mentoring or support, and suitable job design, so people feel supported and trusted by the organization, and in response, staff establish allegiance to the company and accept impediments that develops into job satisfaction. The authors contended that employees who are satisfied exhibit positive emotional behaviors that result in satisfaction that ultimately provide improvements in business performances. The SET perspective connects the emergence of different patterns of relationship development and how diverse types of resource exchange contribute to new venture growth (Huang & Knight, 2015). Social exchange is the basic underpinning of relationships between individuals, groups, and organizations (Barbalet, 2017).

According to SET, obligations are generated through a series of interactions between parties that are in a state of reciprocal interdependence that are used to explain why employees respond to these conditions with various degrees of engagement

(Barbalet, 2017). As it relates to turnover, leaders who continuously meet the expectations of employees results in increased employee retention rates which further results in building the rare human capital resource of the organization (Kashyap & Rangnekar, 2016). Ertürk and Vurgun (2015) contended that perceptions on organizational support facilitate the relationship between psychological empowerment and turnover intentions.

Transformational leadership theory. Introduced by Burns (1978) and then operationalized by Bass (1985), transformational leadership one of the most often studied leadership style in organizational behavior over the past 3 decades. Burns recognized processes where leaders experience higher levels of success through inspiring followers that increase both morale and motivation. Transformational leaders are viewed as charismatic, in which they arouse inspiration, provide intellectual stimulation, and treat followers with individualized considerations (Caillier, 2014). Transformational leadership theory proposes transformational leaders influence their followers by developing and communicating a collective vision and inspiring them to look beyond self-interests for the good of the team and organization (Groves, 2013).

Transformational leaders attempt to encourage follower behavior that brings forth the best in themselves and others too (Jyoti & Bhau, 2015). Research on transformational leadership viewed rigorous, indicating that the qualities of transformational leadership lead to exceptional performance in organizational settings (Bass, 1985). Several issues investigated include a positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational effectiveness; the direct effect of

motivation, morality, and empowerment; and the effects of transformational leadership training on subordinates' organizational commitment and financial performance (Joo & Lim, 2013). Transformational leaders' abilities to emphasize the salience and value of missions influence such attitudes as turnover intentions and extra-role behaviors (Caillier, 2016). Leaders may be able to lower turnover intentions and increase extra-role behaviors by enhancing the saliency of an agency's mission (Caillier, 2016).

Transformational leadership may also affect turnover intentions through mission valence. Transformational leadership is believed to influence followers by communicating inspiring visions to them, directing their attention to important group goals, fulfilling their needs, and stimulating and nurturing their intellect (Saboe et al., 2015). Transformational leadership responds to the intrinsic values that are important to public employees, while motivating them to attain higher level goals (Caillier, 2014). Caillier (2014) contended transformational leadership consistently impacts work-related attitudes and behaviors, such as enhancing extra role and lowering turnover intentions. Transformational leaders are likely to reduce employee withdrawal cognitions as leaders demonstrate the significance of the organization's mission as well as its congruence with the values of employees (Caillier, 2014). Tang et al. (2014) maintained value congruence is more likely to lead to enhanced group functioning, greater positive affect and commitment, and lower turnover. Joo and Lim (2013) contended transformational leaders are considered to have a positive effect on promoting followers' performance so they can reach a higher level. Transformational leaders may reduce turnover intentions because they establish an emotional commitment between employees and the mission of

the organization by practicing inspirational motivation (Caillier, 2014). Transformational leaders attend to the needs of employees by providing them with individualized consideration (Caillier, 2014). Hewitt et al. (2014) proposed that transformational leadership practices have modest but significant and positive effects on achievement. Transformational leaders impact turnover intentions with building trust, admiration, and respect from employees (Gyensare et al., 2016). Transformational leadership theory focuses more on change that inspires followers to commit to a shared vision and goals for a unit or an organization, which differs from Herzberg's notion that job satisfaction not only involves leadership but other factors which are critical in motivating employees to remain committed to the organization (Amankwaa & Anku-Tsedo, 2015). Transformational leadership theory is centered on change orientation by inspiring followers with good team and organizational efforts (Groves, 2013). Transformational leadership theory maintains positive effects on turnover intentions when leaders have direct contact with employees and foster their ability to inspire and provide charismatic leadership; consequently, transformational leadership theory may not be as effective when motivating employees in different locations (Caillier, 2016).

Vroom's expectancy theory. Contrary to the motivation-hygiene theory, Vroom (1964) developed the expectancy theory based on motivating factors that drive decision-making processes for acting or behaving in a particular way. Expectancy theory attempts to identify relationships among variables as a cognitive theory of motivation (Chen, Ellis, & Suresh, 2016). Vroom's expectancy theory focused on how and why people made decisions that produced maximum satisfaction while reducing minimum pain. The

expectancy theory contends that employees will be motivated to work harder if they believe their effort will result in good performance, and that performance will lead to a reward, and that reward will satisfy a need worth the effort (Nimri, Bdair, & Al Bitar, 2015).

Specifically, Vroom theorized (a) expectancy, (b) instrumentality, and (c) valence explain the reason behind employees' motivation and this can be explored through understanding the employees' perception of the effort they put into work and the reward they receive in return (Nimri et al., 2015). The term *expectancy* is a person's perception of the probability that effort will lead to a satisfactory performance (Ernst, 2014). Instrumentality is the perceived correlation between the successful completion of a task and the attainment of a result (Ernst, 2014). Valence refers to the degree of strength of a person's attraction to an outcome (Ernst, 2014). Vroom (1964) argued that expectancy and valence combined to form motivation, and the statistical sum of the products of valence of all performance goals and expectancies should be used to determine motivation.

The key constructs of the expectancy theory on motivation differ from those proposed in Herzberg theory. Vroom expectancy theory does not discuss what motivates employees but focuses more on outcomes of job performance rather than human needs (Ernst, 2014). Contrasting Herzberg, Vroom expectancy theory does not examine people or the change of their thoughts, feelings, behavior, and motivators with time and experience (Parijat & Bagga, 2014). Unlike Herzberg, Vroom (1964) distinguished a decision-making process that reflects a person's potential outcomes for the actions

chosen. Both Vroom and Herzberg successfully identified influences towards job satisfaction by establishing two different methods on motivation.

Transactional leadership theory. Transactional leadership style operates as a kind of social exchange between the leaders and the followers (Buch, Thompson, & Kuvaas, 2016). Transactional leadership uses a system obtained by reward and punishment; the focus of this style is to supervise, organize, and perform individually as well as a group (Sudha, Shahnawaz, & Farhat, 2016). The transactional style of leadership is theorized to comprise two first-order factors: contingent reward and active management by exception (Yasir et al., 2016). A contingent compensation may be called a constructive transaction that identifies the leader's behavior, focused on clearly identifying the tasks along with the expected rewards to be received on accomplishment, thus fulfilling the spirit of exchange between the parties (Yasir et al., 2016).

Tromp and Blomme (2014) argued that transactional leadership occurs in a chain of command run from the top down, which emphasizes intentional change. Leaders are seen to hold legitimate authority and as individuals who have the power to influence followers (Tromp & Blomme, 2014). Transactional leaders focus on exchanges that present extrinsic incentives by closely monitoring results and by granting rewards if the outcome of member conduct is aligned with the goals of the organization (Tromp & Blomme, 2014). Geier (2016) maintained transactional leaders set forth clear expectations, and leaders often monitor the actions taken by their followers and apply corrective action as soon as they occur if needed.

Transactional leadership is different from Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory because it does not focus on individual or personal needs of the employee but rather on performance that fosters competition (Tromp & Blomme, 2014). The challenges of employing transactional leadership in the social work profession arise due to constant changes with job functions and the need to have flexible leadership. In the social work profession, leaders must understand employee ideas and creativity are important in producing greater efficiencies and higher performance which become important for both innovation and reducing turnover (Deichmann & Stam, 2015). Tyssen, Wald, and Spieth (2014) argued transactional leaders are more effective when focused on specific projects rather than path-goal oriented employees. Because an exchange process is utilized, transactional leadership only appeals to lower-order needs, such as pay and security, and the result is that transactional leadership has a much smaller impact on desirable consequences (Caillier, 2016).

Background of Social Work Professions

The social work profession represents a unique profession in the United States, as well as throughout the world. Before discussing why turnover represents a significant issue for social work professionals, it is important to understand the nature of the profession and the significance in minimizing turnover. The occupation of social work promotes change, development, unity, empowerment, and liberty of people (Anastas, 2014). Social work professionals exemplify principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversities (Anastas, 2014). According to Beckett (2017), social work has always been inseparable from social need, social justice,

and human development; producing an underlying drive that focused on intensely embedded imbalances and inequalities in society. Social worker service is personified by a client-centered approach which involves intense client-employee interactions, creating a need for high levels of personal understanding between clients, representatives, and employees of professional services firms (Frey et al., 2013). Social workers provide support through empowerment and through a client- centered approach (Beddoe, Davys, & Adamson, 2014). In addition, social workers provide advocacy for service as well as responding to psychological loss, crisis, and change in individual settings with special care to those developmental transitions throughout the human lifecycle (Beddoe et al., 2014). Tremblay et al. (2016) maintains social service organizations operate under agency auspices to include government, nonprofit, or private for-profit establishments to improve social welfare for those in need, including people with low-income, illness or disability, older adults, and children which makes the problem of high turnover in the profession significant to both employers and our society.

Social workers are focused on helping people solve and cope with problems in their everyday lives (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Overall the need for social work professional is projected to grow 15 % from 2016 to 2026, faster than the average for all occupations; growth in the profession is driven by increased demand for healthcare and social services (BLS, 2015). As a result, social work practitioners are working with people in a variety of roles, including case work, intervention, assessment, advocacy, and care management (Beckett, 2017). Pockett and Beddoe (2016) indicated that social workers have a significant role to play through developing a stronger engagement with

the social determinants of health in everyday practice. Therefore, increased diversity in society produces a demand that traditional models of social work progress to a more consistent culture in which different ethnicities, races, religions, creeds, and capabilities live side by side (Beckett, 2017). Subsequently, social work is not simply a bridge between the state and those in need; it is a vital method for promoting difference and diversity and negating the ill effects of marginalization, power, and privilege (Beckett 2017). Thus, making it imperative that leaders encourage and equip employees to stay within the organization. Reduction of employee turnover within the profession provides the potential to help the economy and well as the industry.

For social service organizations consequences of high staff turnover have grave consequences on the society as well as the continuity of care and decrease the intervention reliability of new programs (Tremblay et al., 2016). Social workers distinguish themselves as a particularly exposed occupational group, reporting higher workloads and more challenging demands in comparison with other human service workers (Welander, Astvik, & Isaksson, 2016). Child and family social workers are consistently found to have high levels of stress, and this has often been linked to burnout and retention problems in the profession (Antonopoulou, Killian, & Forrester, 2017). Song and Lee (2015) indicated the retention of social workers is significant because rising turnover rates directly impact declines in quality of service. Challenges with social worker satisfaction and subsequent high staff turnover rates are not new to the profession (Schweitzer et al., 2013). In the United States, voluntary employee turnover rates in social work professionals are estimated nationally to range between 30% and 40% (Boyas

et al., 2013). The problem is not only limited to actual turnover but also includes employees wanting or planning to quit their jobs; studies found that 11% of staff working in one state's juvenile correctional facilities intended to leave the agency for purposes other than retirement (Wells, Minor, Lambert, & Tilley, 2016). There are widespread problems across many countries in the recruitment and retention of social workers. Searle and Patent (2013) presented factors that contribute to social workers' decisions to leave both their current employer and the profession include work stress, burnout, job dissatisfaction, low organizational and professional commitment, little reward, and lack of social support. Social workers that are new to the field experience higher rates of burnout, vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and vocational turnover (Grady & Cantor, 2012). Employee turnover is tied fundamentally to organizational performance in the private and the public sector (Campbell, Im, & Jeong, 2014). Because of these challenges, rural and remote communities have been found to have trouble in successfully recruiting and retaining social work professionals (Shier & Graham, 2015). When considering that social workers play a role vital to public service turnover directly deteriorates the quality of social services.

Turnover intentions. Employee turnover refers to the rate of movement of workers in and out of an organization (Miminoshvili, 2016). Therefore, turnover can be either voluntary or involuntary; voluntary turnover implies employee leaves the organization willingly (Saeed, Waseem, Sikander, & Rizwan, 2014). Turnover is a serious issue within the social work profession. High turnover may indicate employees are dissatisfied and seeking higher paying jobs (Faulk & Hicks, 2015). The problem

surrounded by employee turnover represents a significant challenge with the retirement wave of the baby boom generation becoming inevitable management perspectives about turnover from younger generations needs to be examined. This importance of reducing turnover continues to develop with research indicating that turnover intention may be a valid representation of actual turnover behavior (Frederiksen, 2017).

Research studies on turnover reveal that when an employee quits, it imposes costs on the organization (Frederiksen, 2017). Turnover implications have both active and adverse effects on the organization. High turnover rates become problematic for administrators since they are financially taxing for facilities (Armstrong et al., 2014). The issue of employee turnover disturbs the overall performance of the organization if leaders fail to manage it appropriately, adverse effect on the performance will be unavoidable (Wakabi, 2016). Turnover can also weaken team performance, lessen customer service, and result in lost job knowledge (Junchao et al., 2016).

Turnover intention is the most commonly used in the researcher to describe employees' propensity to leave the companies (Surienty et al., 2014). Turnover intention involves employee's anticipations to quit the organization; individual's plan to voluntary quit the organization, or the profession is regarded as predictor of actual turnover (Bandhanpreet & Mohindru, 2014). Research candidly proposed that dissatisfied employees leave, whereas satisfied employees stay (Junchao et al., 2016). Turnover intent indicates employees are discontented, unengaged, or unproductive and view their current job as a temporary solution until better employment materializes (Wells et al., 2016). Boon and Biron (2016) revealed that indirect cost associated with turnover

intentions such as job searches, unemployment, learning and adjusting to a new position. A larger issue proposed that the behavioral attitude of the person desiring to withdraw is an effective predictor of actual turnover (Boon & Biron, 2016). However, high employee turnover is a continuous problem among social workers and researchers maintained additional information on factors influencing intentions is necessary to mitigate adverse impacts on organizations (Campbell et al., 2014). High turnover is costly with the resulting outflow of knowledge and resources spent on recruiting and adaptation training therefore detrimental to professional services firms (Frey et al., 2013).

Voluntary turnover, in which the employee chooses to leave the environment and is not fired or asked to leave, can have an adversarial impact on the workplace (Jun-Chen et al., 2015). Positive shared attitudes and perceptions indicate employee benefits that would be foregone through leaving, whereas shared negative views encourage employees to look somewhere else for more satisfying work (Armstrong, Hartje, & Evans, 2014). Fernandez et al. (2017) put forward research that points to job satisfaction as a key predictor of turnover intention; job satisfaction has consistently adverse effects on turnover intention and actual turnover. The significance of turnover to leaders developed because, research started to show that employee turnover occurs in response to dissatisfaction with one's job (Fernandez et al., 2017). Wakabi (2016) stated that job stress, low level of organizational commitment, and job dissatisfaction are the most common reasons some employees leave their jobs. Work dissatisfaction is a factor that leads the individual to explore new alternatives (Arnoux-Nicolas et al., 2016). Recent studies on turnover found job satisfaction change was a predictor of turnover; many

organizations are seeking systematic approaches to identify shifts in employees such as attitudes that increase turnover and decrease job satisfaction (Garner & Hunter, 2014). The loss of key employees, characterized as being highly interdependent and specialized, may influence the ability to remain employees in fulfilling their tasks; the higher the level of the position to be filled the greater the potential for disruption (Amankwaa & Anku-Tsede, 2015).

High turnover as a result of employees' lack of motivation behind quitting is an incentive for leaders to prevent or at least to be able to predict when and where quits can be expected (Frederiksen, 2017). Cho and Song (2017) concluded that studies had been conducted to explore organizational factors affecting turnover, which include work-related characteristics demonstrated that job satisfaction, pay satisfaction, creativity, professional development, promotion based on merit, and having a good work group substantially contribute to decreasing turnover intention. The finding from Cho and Song are relevant to the study because the results demonstrate numerous factors may contribute to turnover, identification of more than one method may be instrumental in improving retention. Consequently, several strategies and tools may be necessary for leadership to reduce turnover particularly to social work professionals.

Burnout. Burnout is an affliction of those who care which can cause the numbing of the internal signals of emotions, a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion (Lee, 2017). People who work in public service jobs require a higher level of emotional management because they interact with citizens, during the worst moment of the worst day of their lives such emotional work may lead to more burnout and job

dissatisfaction (Lee, 2017). Significantly, burnout and job satisfaction directly relate to organizational outcomes, including turnover intention, absenteeism, work performance, and quality of service (Lee, 2017). Rahim and Cosby (2016) analyzed burnout with three components, including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment. Leip et al. (2017) emphasized depersonalization leads to cynical attitudes toward others in which employees are inclined to distance themselves from coworkers and clients. Exhaustion repeatedly displayed in conjunction with reduced satisfaction and diminishing commitment, increases turnover intentions (Kilo & Hassmén, 2016).

Lu and Gorsey (2016) indicated as with other service workers such as teachers, nurses, social workers, and health care professionals who have been reported to exhibit high job burnout rates. Burnout increase in intensity within environments where perceptions of control leave employees feeling frustrated and stoic about their ability to positively impact the organization or the people in it (Leip et al., 2017). Burnout persisted with a variety of negative responses to the job, including job dissatisfaction, low organizational commitment, and high job turnover (Hernandez-Wolfe, Killian, Engstrom, & Gangsei, 2014). Undoubtedly, burnout is one of the most substantial forecasters of job satisfaction and turnover intention (Munger, Savage, & Panosky, 2015). While there is a plethora of information into the negative effects of job burnout, the issue within leadership to influence emotions effectively can lead to job-related stress, which can potentially create personal health risks; these risks contribute to an estimated \$300 billion

in annual costs to firms because of employee turnover, employee absenteeism, and medical and legal insurance (Cho et al., 2017).

Work life imbalance. A satisfactory balance between work and nonwork is a central concern for employees and organizations (Visser et al., 2016). Bochantin and Cowan (2016) take note of the U.S. census reports that about 15 million people work evenings, nights, rotating shifts, or irregular schedules or hours. Balancing work and family domains can strain even the most resourceful employee; conflict between the two may result in the negative impact on employee well-being (Armstrong, Atkin-Plunk, & Wells, 2015).

Wright et al. (2014) identified that increased demands between work and home are relevant for employees due to changes in the workplace, such as rising numbers of women in the labor force, an aging population, longer working hours, and more sophisticated communication technologies that enable nearly constant contact with the workplace. Work–life conflict is known to be predictive of depression, alcoholism, emotional exhaustion, and lowered life satisfaction (Visser et al., 2016). These changes have led to higher levels of stress and job insecurity, correspondingly increasing the sense of responsibility, time, and effort individual workers put into the paid workplace, frequently to the detriment of time and energy in other life domains (Clouston, 2014). Budd and Spencer (2014) presented that low levels of work life balance can result in job dissatisfaction that impacts turnover intentions. Mullen (2015) indicated stress is a consequence of work–life imbalance. Institutions that fail to support work/life fit are

likely to see increased turnover because satisfaction impacts one's intentions to leave an institution (Tower et al., 2015).

Sur and Ng (2014) defined job stress as the potential for ill health that could develop when job demands are at variance with the needs, expectations, or capacities of the worker. Law and Guo (2015) contend job stress is indicative of a worker's feelings of job-related tension, anxiety, frustration, worry, emotional exhaustion, and distress. High levels of work stress result in many individual and organizational issues such as lower motivation, productivity, absenteeism, and turnover intention (Chetty, Coetzee, & Ferreira, 2015). Stress within the workplace was found to affect job satisfaction, performance, and turnover intentions (Chao, Jou, Liao, & Kuo, 2015). Workload is one source of stress or something that causes a person to feel stressed when the person thinks they are unable to cope with the large workload (Wang et al., 2015). Wang et al. (2015) argued job stress can be predictive of numerous negative outcomes such as job dissatisfaction and job burnout. Chetty et al. (2015) relates job stress to poor or unsupportive relationships with colleagues and line managers. Accordingly, job stress is strongly linked to employee perceptions of decision-making authority and control process among the organization (Chetty et al., 2015). Dockterman and Weber (2017) maintained employee stress overtakes inspiration while increased anxiety replaces optimism. Park, Chae, and Kim (2017) presented work stress that causes overload is a major reason that high performers feel job dissatisfaction and leave their current position to work at another firm, despite the rewards existing at the current organization.

Consequences of Turnover in Various Industries

Employee turnover impacts most business organization, regardless of the industry and size (Grzenda & Buczyński, 2015). Employee turnover has significant consequences for groups, work units, and administrations (Hausknecht & Holwerda, 2013). Agencies often invest vast amount of resources in recruitment efforts to interest a diverse pool of qualified applicants (Wareham et al., 2013). Uncontrolled and excessive turnover involve huge direct and indirect costs for company (Pang, Kucukusta, & Chan, 2015). Pang et al. (2015) argued that there are five types of costs related to employee turnover: (a) separation costs such as exit interviews and pay for separation, (b) recruitment costs such as advertising cost, (c) referral cost and agency fees, (d) selection costs such as the cost for interview reference checks and medical check-ups; (e) hiring costs such as cost to arrange orientations and training; and lost productivity costs including pre departure productivity cost and cost for error and waste. The cost of recruiting and training new hires can range from 90% to 200% of a former employee's annual salary; beyond these expenses, turnover can also lower profits and likelihood of firm survival retaining employees remains vital (Junchao, 2016).

Grisson and Mitani (2016) conducted a study with approximately 525 school districts employees in Missouri. The sample focused on superintendents to investigate work decisions and turnover intent. Approximately 20% of superintendents turn over each year, with more than half of them leaving the superintendence altogether (Grissom & Mitani, 2016). The excessive rates of turnover calculated a 3-year tenure which raised concerns about a revolving door in the superintendence (Grissom & Mitani, 2016). The

researcher's maintained that factors superintendents value in decisions about moves to new superintendent positions were largely associated with terms of annual compensation. Grissom and Mitani maintained that low pay for superintendents in rural districts was one reason for patterns consistent with turnover intentions. The relationship between low pay and turnover contributed to the leadership talent shortages faced by rural school districts with leaders focusing on methods to attract qualified personnel into superintendent positions in order to curtail leadership inconstancy (Grissom & Mitani, 2016). Ferreira and Almeida (2016) contented human resources practices, such as rewards, recognition and training, affect employee turnover. Tae-Yung and Shaw (2013) maintained that when experienced employees leave, an organization suffers because it loses accrued human capital.

Garner and Hunter (2014) conducted a study with 105 clinicians who were eligible and agreed to participate. This study examined the extent to which changes over time in clinicians' responses to measures of work attitude. Garner and Hunter argued that job satisfaction and the psychological climate of supervisor support impacted actual turnover and turnover intentions. The findings from the study presented that turnover impacts organization focusing on key employee attitudes like turnover intentions and job satisfaction may reduce turnover (Garner & Hunter, 2014). Higher staff turnover is now known to be associated with a decrease in organizational performance (Tremblay et al., 2016). The current cost of a resigning employee equates about a year of their salaries (Boroş & Curşeu, 2013). Employee turnover reduces staff morale, which may cause a

deterioration in the quality of products and services, and lead in turn to a drop-in customer satisfaction and company profit (Pang et al., 2015).

In Wendsche, Hacker, and Wegge's (2017) cross-sectional, multi-method study, with 80 German nurse to examine the relationship of understaffing with turnover intentions. Wendsche, Hacker, and Wegge argued that understaffing contributed to that increased employee turnover driven by higher workload, lower professional interactions and lower job satisfaction. Replacement of qualified nurses became especially costly, replacement of qualified RNs was noted at \$48,000 for a medical-surgical nurse, \$64,000 for a critical care nurse, and can even extend up to 125% of the nurse's annual salary (Wendsche et al., 2017). New-hire losses result in exponential increases in per capita hiring, produce intense workloads for remaining staff that are constantly onboarding new hires, and can drive departures and early retirements of tenured staff (Kurnat-Thoma, Ganger, Peterson, & Channell, 2017). Ahmad and Omar (2013) maintained organizations that mitigate understaffing and work life imbalance reduce both their job stress and turnover intention. Workplace dynamics that drive employee turnover, or voluntary employment termination, are often modifiable (Kurnat-Thoma et al., 2017). Furthermore, because staff turnover may naturally occur due to retirement or death, research is needed to develop strategies for helping to reduce the extent to which staff turnover has adverse impacts in regard to increased stress on remaining staff (Garner & Hunter, 2014).

Retention Strategies

Leadership is a vital tool for management when properly used; it can either enhance healthy relationships among employees or have adverse effects on outcomes (Amankwaa & Anku-Tsedre, 2015). Poor leadership shape employee loyalty to stay or quit the job as well as engagement (Miminoshvili, 2016). The concept of leadership is critical to employees' work attitudes, which significantly influence organizational performance, effectiveness, and social outcomes (Amankwaa & Anku-Tsedre, 2015). Leaders use their power to draw employees towards achieving goals and maximize the results in the organization (Wakabi, 2016). To help lessen employees quitting intentions, both middle and top-level managers should endeavor to create an atmosphere of trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect for their employees (Gyensare et al., 2016).

In this view, leaders have a social responsibility to implement decisions with a high level of ethical conduct and moral value, and they should play a vital role in shaping their followers' behavior, thus improving their firms' decent performances as a whole (Tang et al., 2014). Effective leadership is considered a key attribute in producing administrative reforms (Caillier, 2014). Leadership influences organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention (Ahmed, Reaburn, Samad, & Davis, 2015).

Employee engagement. Poor workforce engagement can be damaging to organizations resulting in a decrease of employee well-being and productivity (Shuck & Reio, 2013). Employee engagement has increased in many organizations both domestic and internationally. Employee engagement is a critical driver for organizational success,

corporate sustainability, and a key factor for competitive advantages (Basit & Arshad, 2016). Employee engagement encompasses many traditional concepts such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, employee turnover and retention, employee motivation as well as emerging concepts in the field such as proactivity, adaptivity, and flow (Karumuri, 2016). Employees who are engaged express themselves regarding emotional, physical, and cognitive aspects, which lead to the success of organizations (Mozammel & Haan, 2016). Engaged employees are those who display behavior of enjoyment, pride, self-motivation during their work, and bring in their personal selves during their work (Pandita & Singhal, 2017). Engaged employees work with passion and feel a profound connection to their company; they drive innovation and carry organizations forward (Pandita & Singhal, 2017).

Positive working environments foster open communication and trust (Mishra, Boynton, & Mishra, 2014). Such positive environments promote engagement when leaders demonstrate honesty, transparency, genuine caring, support, and the willingness to listen to employees (Mishra et al., 2014). Leaders who use engagement strategies invest in flexible efforts towards the organization and employees, which becomes a critical factor in delivering the desired business result needed (Gupta & Sharma, 2016). Employee engagement strategies within many organizations are used as an attempt to remain successful in this turbulent market, to maintain knowledgeable, capable, flexible, and dedicated workforce with flexible and innovative management that can retain the pool of developed talents (Gupta & Sharma, 2016).

Leaders provide engagement through opportunities for career development, recognition of their work, and the company's reputation (Stoyanova & Iliev, 2017). Managers involved in engagement take initiatives and help their employees in visualizing their future, lay down career goals, and let employees know leadership adopts a mentoring role in achieving that (Megha, 2016). Megha (2016) indicated engagement as being different from other employee role constructs such as job involvement, commitment, or intrinsic motivation, indicating it focuses on how psychological experiences of work shape the process of people presenting and absenting themselves during task performances. Rao (2017) maintained employees who believe that management is concerned about them as a whole person, not just an employee, become more productive, more satisfied, more fulfilled. Popli and Rizvi (2016) conducted a research study in which they examined 49,928 business or work units and covering about 1.4 million employees in 192 organizations, across 49 industries, in 34 countries, concluded that employee engagement strongly relates to key organizational outcomes in any economic climate, and that employee engagement is an important competitive differentiator for organizations. Popli and Rizvi also maintained active employee engagement lowered turnover by 25 % in high-turnover organizations and 65% lower turnover in low-turnover organizations.

Jose and Mampilly (2014) posited high levels of employee engagement are positively associated with the overall wellbeing of employees and reduces burnout. Jose and Mampilly maintained when meaning is provided in employees work it is a method that foster employees' motivation and attachment to work, thus resulting in engagement.

Leaders that promote organizational involvement impact whether individuals feel that they are making a difference in their organization; thus, the sense of progression towards a goal and individuals' belief that their actions are making a difference in their organizations, contributes to employee engagement (Jose & Mampilly, 2014). Job engagement thus supports employee's psychological mindfulness, safety, and availability which overtime increases the support and commitment to the organization (Akingbola & van den Berg, 2016). Bryant and Allen (2013) presented employees that perceive positive relationships with others in the organization are less likely to quit. Organizations and managers that foster positive relationships among coworkers, provide opportunities for interaction and help newcomers form and develop relationships reduce employee intentions to quit (Bryant & Allen, 2013).

Employee retention. One of the key challenges facing service businesses is the management and preservation of their frontline employees. These individuals perform critical tasks and often serve both as the operational engine and as the customer interface for the firm. Employee retention is one of the primary measures to determine the overall and fiscal health of an organization (Kurnat-Thoma et al., 2017). An inability to retain them has detrimental consequences, such as productivity declines, lost tacit knowledge, erosion in customer relationships, and additional costs of new employee training (Kumar, Dass, & Topaloglu, 2014). Tanwar and Prasad (2016) maintained that loss of experienced and skilled employees to its competitors impacts both intellectual and human capital.

Dewah and Mutula (2016) defined knowledge management as a collection of organizational practices that generate, capture, and disseminate know how and promote knowledge sharing both within the organization and with the outside world. Dewah and Mutula explained organizations strive to use learning as a tool to reach their goals, and the benefit of learning is key to retaining key personnel within the organization. Pek-Greer and Wallace (2017) emphasized that retention strategies are closely related to employee remuneration, benefits, professional development, and the work environment. Pek-Greer and Wallace argued that both financial and non-financial rewards are strong indicators of employee retention; when employees feel satisfied they have higher levels of loyalty towards their organization.

Employee retention can be conceptualized either because of employee behavior or as a goal of management (Frey, 2013). Employee retention has always been an important and crucial issue faced by organizations worldwide (Kashyap & Rangnekar, 2016). Employees linked by positive relationships with others in the organization are less likely to quit. Organizations and managers should consider working to foster positive relationships among coworkers, provide opportunities for interaction and help newcomers form and develop relationships (Bryant & Allen, 2013). Cascio (2014) contended that in an emerging economic environment successful leadership from a talent perspective involves organizations with positive employer brands, performance management strategies that maximize employee potential, innovative approaches, and social-learning tools are key elements of employee retention.

Frederiksen (2017) conducted a study on job satisfaction and employee turnover as it relates to retaining employees. The study evaluated research regarding the relationship between employee job satisfaction and a firm's ability to retain employees (Frederiksen, 2017). In conducting the survey, it was found that job satisfaction elicited information about employee's perceptions on management and their turnover intention (Frederiksen, 2017). Heller (2017) noted that financial rewards are not what retains employees; a solid direction aligned with company values, goal management from those in higher authority and learning and development opportunities. Internal communication between the organization's leaders reflects management's ability to build relationships between internal stakeholders at all levels within an organization (Mishra et al., 2014).

Mishra et al. (2014) provided that the role of internal communication illuminates the connections between different pieces of information and its job is to provide employees with the information they need to do their job. Bryant and Allen (2013) maintained employees that are given clear role expectations, minimal role conflict, and opportunities for growth and advancement are less likely to quit. Organizations in which managers are trained on the importance of providing clear role expectations, design organizational processes to minimize role conflict and develop and communicate career paths, especially to highly valued employees reduce turnover among employees (Bryant & Allen, 2013).

Employee empowerment. Employee empowerment improves job satisfaction by giving employees a sense of control and making work more meaningful (Kim & Fernandez, 2017). Employee empowerment was recognized as an essential contributor to

organizational success empowerment as intrinsic task motivation manifested in a set of four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact (Jose & Mampilly, 2014). Ukil (2016) posited employee empowerment gives employees a sense of feelings that creates commitment and a sense of belonging, builds trust, promotes effective communication, and increases organizational effectiveness and employee wellbeing. One of the factors associated with the link between management and employee empowerment is creating organizational trust by managers in the organization that produce positive expectations (Begzadeh & Nedaei, 2017). Ukil presented employee empowerment as one of the most effective means of allowing employees at every level to utilize their creative thinking and abilities to improve the quality of their work and the performance of the organization.

Lorinkova and Perry (2014) defined as a tool that allows employee participating in decision making, emphasizing employee strengths, and removing bureaucratic constraints. Lorinkova and Perry emphasized through empowerment leaders foster a positive exchange with employees through equaling power and communication. Lorinkova and Perry contended that empowering leadership is a promising strategy that can impact employee attitudes, behaviors, and cynicisms. Hao et al. (2017) conducted a studied that revealed empowering leaderships had an indirect positive impact on employee work performance and their passion for work. Hao et al. presented that empowering leaders increase employee's passion for work, both harmonious and obsessive passion. Mishra et al. (2014) posited that employees who receive information from their supervisors and coworkers that is timely, accurate, and relevant, they are more

likely to feel less vulnerable and more able to rely on their coworkers and supervisors.

Jose and Mampilly (2014) argued empowerment in the workplace leads to job enrichment, which involves designing jobs with high levels of meaning, direction, and knowledge of results. Mishra et al. posited employee's knowledge and skills about their job and the organization provide them the ability to become advocates to customers and enhances both the firm's reputation as well as the essential point that increases productivity and profitability.

Srivastava (2016) conducted a study on 280 middle-level managers of private sector banks. The study examined the significance between psychological empowerment and turnover intention. With human capital being a tower of strength for an organization, it is appropriate that organizations emphasize the role of guidance with empowerment and thereby reducing turnover intentions. Srivastava contended if the employees are more empowered, they will be more enthusiastic, and quick to respond to both organizational and customer needs. Organizations can use job satisfaction to discover improper allocation phenomena and deficiencies in strategy or planning early. This helps them perform the appropriate remedies. Job satisfaction is also an important reference basis when organizations develop strategies. Bryant and Allen (2013) argued job satisfaction and organizational commitment are key attitudes and consistent predictors of individual turnover decisions. Organizations should consider assessing and managing both job satisfaction and job commitment (Bryant & Allen, 2013). Job satisfaction defined as enjoyable or positive emotional state resulting from one's job or job experiences (Kumar et al., 2014). Leaders that fail to promote employee job satisfaction and employee

empowerment affects the turnover intent. Park et al. (2017) presented that high levels of job satisfaction can benefit overall performances of employees who sense both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Chan et al. (2015) posited empowerment is a tool used in leadership strategies that enhance employees' job satisfaction through enabling employees to have better control over their work which in turn leads to increased productivity and reduced turnover. Chang (2014) held that job satisfaction can act as an indicator providing organizations with early warnings and an important reference basis during decision making or planning within organizational management. Favorable conditions and environments of workplaces that support and promote employee satisfaction by providing employee rewards, job security and growth opportunities empower employee that is essential for organizations to react quickly to changes in the environment (Jose & Mampilly, 2014). Park et al. maintained that leadership style impact employees' empowered behavior which focuses on an employee's psychological experience, such as the perceptions of being empowered at work or the individual reactions to those organizational structures, policies, and practices. Ukil (2016) proposed empowerment that fosters positive emotional state creates the relationship of expectation of an employee from its job that ultimately produces employee satisfaction.

Transition

In Section 1, I outlined the purpose of the qualitative case study, which was to explore effective strategies used by leaders to reduce employee turnover in social work professionals. I examined the background of the problem with emphasis on the impact on the social system and society. The literature review encompassed comprehensive

analysis on current research relevant to employee turnover, theories related to turnover intentions to provide deeper insight, and other themes used throughout the literature review to provide an exhaustive understanding of the research topic.

In Section 2, I will discuss the purpose of the study, a role of the researcher, the participants, methods and designs, population, sampling, and ethical research. I will also present information on the process of data collection and analysis. In addition, I described the reliability and validity in qualitative research with particular focus on turnover and social work professionals in Section 2. My objective for Section 3 was to (a) present the research findings (b) expand on application to practice and implications for social change, (c) make recommendations for action and propose areas for future research, and (d) present my personal reflection about the Doctoral processes, as well as conclusions of the study.

Section 2: The Project

In this section, I will examine data on reducing turnover in the social work profession. First I will provide the purpose statement with the intent of describing the chosen method, design, population, setting, and implications of research. Section 2 will also contain a discussion of my responsibilities as researcher aligned with the principles of the *Belmont Report*. I will also provide my rationale for selecting a qualitative method and single case study design to explore strategies that social work leaders use to reduce employee turnover. Moreover, there will be a discussion of the population and sampling, ethical research, collection, and the analytical processes. Section 2 will conclude with me addressing my plan of assurance of the reliability and validity of the study findings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore effective strategies that social work leaders use to reduce employee turnover. The targeted population was comprised of 10 social work managers from organizations in South Carolina, who experienced employee turnover and implemented successful strategies to reduce it. The implications of positive social change include the potential to enrich leaders' understanding of effective strategies to strengthen employee engagement promoting organizational success and growth, which may lead to new employment opportunities and engagement of families in the local communities.

Role of the Researcher

In a qualitative study, a researcher must account for both personal and professional experience that could interfere with data collection, analysis, and

interpretation of data (Hallberg, 2013). The researcher's role includes but is not limited to listening, learning, and observing (Rosetto, 2014). As the primary data collection instrument, my role as the researcher was to conduct interviews, interpret findings, and analyze data without intentional misrepresentation. In fulfilling this role, I followed the interview protocol (see Appendix A) that specifies an opening statement, the use of semi-structured interview questioning, and the recording of interviews.

Prior knowledge can present potential bias and leave the researcher unsure during data collection processes (Davis et al., 2016). Identifying potential sources of bias can help a researcher mitigate them (Rosetto, 2014). I am familiar with the topic of this study because I have worked with social work professionals. Throughout my experience, both educationally and professionally, I have learned about and witnessed high employee turnover among social work professionals. My professional experience was key to my choice of topic and my desire to understand how leaders determine intervention processes with key employees.

Protection of research participants is the bedrock of all well-conducted research projects (Bradbury-Jones, Taylor, & Herber, 2014). The *Belmont Report* provides a standard for researchers to follow that helps in establishing research practices that reflect key principles such as respect for person, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice (Mikesell, Bromley, & Khodyakov, 2013). A researcher should consider both the risks and the benefits of participation and must impartially distribute any concerns among all participants or societies (Mikesell et al., 2013). A researcher has the obligation of providing sufficient information to participants, maximizing benefits, and minimizing

risks of participation (Mikesell et al., 2013). Researchers must carefully maintain boundaries to protect the relationship (Rosetto, 2014). To ensure ethical research practices, I provided participants with the information needed to make an informed decision about participating in the study. I protected participants' information by not disclosing personally identifying data. It was my intent to establish trust by treating participants with respect and dignity in all interactions.

Rodham et al. (2015) maintained that researchers must engage in reflexivity and become mindful of their roles in the creation of knowledge. To mitigate bias, researchers must depose preconceptions until they become engaged with the data (Rosetto, 2014). I used bracketing as a technique to mitigate bias in this study. Bracketing is a method used to assist researchers in upholding accountability within the research process by setting aside presumptions and acting non-judgmentally to achieve valid interpretations of data (Sorsa, Kikkala, & Astedt-Kurki, 2015).

Choy (2014) contended that assessment and awareness of a situation give researchers the ability to probe for underlying values, beliefs, and assumptions to achieve a full appreciation of an organization. Using an interview protocol can help a researcher to establish rapport with participants by allowing them to be an active listener, be respectful, and remain neutral in relation to the information provided (Darawsheh & Stanley, 2014). Castillo-Montoya (2016) noted that by enhancing the reliability of interview protocols, researchers can increase the quality of data they obtain from research interviews. The criteria used for creating an interview protocol can help a researcher

identify whether any gaps exist in the questions being asked (Darawsheh & Stanley, 2014).

Participants

A proper selection method is imperative to the success of a doctoral study, in which the focus is on the practical outcome or participation beyond the research encounter (Bourke, 2009). Bourke (2009) proposed that participant selection is not just a task that accompanies the research process; rather, it is an essential part of the process that affects how a research project is undertaken. Nelson (2012) indicated that participants must have sufficient knowledge and comprehension of the subject matter involved so that they are able to understand and make enlightened decisions regarding participation. Bromley et al. (2015) argued that participants should be able to provide useful knowledge that might not otherwise be obtained, with the end results being free from misrepresentations and untruths. To qualify for participation in this study, participants were required to meet the following criteria: (a) be at least 18 years of age, (b) have at least 1 year of leadership experience, and (c) direct involvement with social work professionals in a specific county South Carolina.

Gaining access to participants involves finding and obtaining participants for research (Peticca-Harris, deGama, & Elias, 2016). The information captured may vary based on the cases that are being investigated (Johl & Renganathan, 2013). To gain access to participants, a researcher must remain flexible (Kondowe, Calisto, & Booyens, 2014). A formal strategy used for requesting participation may include e-mails, face-to-face interviews, and/or telephone calls. The researcher must provide a framework for

participation, which becomes significant in how individuals understand their role (Davidson & Page, 2012). I contacted social work managers within the study county area in person, by phone, or by e-mail to collect data from them.

Many researchers have highlighted the need to gain the trust of interviewees to obtain the most honest and considered answers (Bell, 2013). Establishing a rapport with participants most commonly involves a relaxed conversation that shadows highly structured interviews (Swider, Barrick, & Harris, 2016). Kennedy-MacFoy (2013) noted that building trust with participants directly impacts the perceived position of the researcher. Achieving an understanding between the researcher and the participating organization is critical for both access and trust (Crowhurst, 2013). *Gatekeepers* are those persons with whom researchers have initial contact in organizations who can initiate their access to participants; gatekeepers can help or hinder the research processes; in order to maintain their cooperation researchers, need to develop a reputation for consistency and integrity. (Crowhurst, 2013).

The cultivation of trusting relationships is critical to a researcher's ability to address concerns throughout the research process (Rencher & Wolf, 2013). Establishing trust with participants can be achieved by communicating both the risks and the benefits of the study (Darawsheh & Stanley, 2014). Nelson (2012) posited that participants should be made aware of the nature, duration, and purpose of the study, in addition to the method and means by which it is to be conducted. With this in mind, I provided participants with information regarding the study, including the purpose of the study and the participants' right to withdraw at any time. By maintaining transparency, a researcher

can express the research process with clarity while building trust with participants (Darawsheh & Stanley, 2014).

Research Method and Design

By providing methodological details such as how data were secured, the type of data collected, and how analysis was carried out, researchers make it possible for their readers to judge the quality and trustworthiness of their studies, as well as how reasonable the results are (Hallberg, 2013). In this study, I used a qualitative method with a case study design. Per Nije and Asimiran (2014), qualitative research involves description, interpretation, verification, and evaluation. When using a case study approach, qualitative scholars seek to understand certain situations and settings, as well as the complexities between relationships (Nije & Asimiran, 2014). The purpose of conducting a case study is to gather in-depth, detailed information about an event, person, or process (Nije & Asimiran, 2014).

Research Method

Researchers can choose from three methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Qualitative methods emphasize exploration, understanding, introspection, and theory construction (Park & Park, 2016). In contrast, researchers use quantitative methods to emphasize numerical data and measure variables (Park & Park, 2016). A qualitative method allows researchers to gain understanding while exploring descriptive accounts and ascertaining similarities and differences in relation to various social events; a qualitative method does not allow for the use of statistical data or hypothesis testing (Park & Park, 2016). Poynter (2015) contended that there are critical distinctions

between qualitative and quantitative methods; they represent different cultures and contrast in the manner in which they establish causal links between phenomena.

Qualitative methods enable a researcher to describe and decode information by understanding communicated data from the past or present (Hlady-Rispal & Jouison-Laffitte, 2014). A qualitative researcher uses information gathered from relatively flexible discussions with research subjects in order to gain a full and complete set of insights into the phenomenon of interest (Star, 2014). Qualitative methods often involve data collection and analysis techniques that use purposive sampling and semistructured, open-ended interviews (Choy, 2014). Using a qualitative method enabled me to explore leaders' perceptions of turnover among social work professionals by conducting interviews and obtaining documents pertaining to employee retention strategies.

Unlike researchers using qualitative methods, researchers using quantitative approaches seek to obtain knowledge through the mathematical treatment of data (Smith, 2014). Quantitative methods offer an effective and efficient way for researchers to investigate the cause-and-effect relationship, but they do not permit researchers to assess phenomena in a real-world context (Poynter, 2015). Quantitative data can help to establish correlations between given variables and outcomes that will allow others to validate original findings by independently replicating the analysis (Choy, 2014). The quantitative method did not meet the needs of the study because it entails the accumulation of facts and causes of behavior through careful isolation, measurement, and evaluation of variables (see Park & Park, 2106).

Mixed-method research uses qualitative and quantitative methods in combination (Star, 2014). Mixed-method research covers a diverse set of practices and offers the benefit of developing the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research, which can offset each other's weaknesses (Star, 2014). The goal of this study was not to quantify turnover through the identification of variables; rather it was to understand and explore what leaders can do to reduce turnover among social work professionals, so a mixed-method was not appropriate.

Research Design

A research design is critical because it reflects the researcher's account of the phenomenon of interest (Star, 2014). It is essential that researchers communicate clearly and comprehensively regarding the investigation process, articulate any criteria that they applied, and describe strategies for trustworthiness (Hays et al., 2016). I used a qualitative case study design in this study. In making this choice, I considered various options from the qualitative research tradition including case study, ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology (see Hays et al., 2016). In-depth interviews refer to extended discussions with research subjects (Star, 2014). Qualitative interviewers seek to understand human behavior, elicit information, and meaning, and learn from participants (Rosetto, 2014).

Researchers can use the case study design to ensure that their findings are backed by evidence, logical flow, and acceptable patterns emerging from the case (Nije & Asimiran, 2014). Star (2014) suggested that the use of a case study can establish key empirical patterns, develop new explanations for observed phenomena, or gauge the

extent to which prevailing theoretical understandings of the phenomena of interest are consistent with evidence provided by the cases. This design requires a great deal of thoroughness and enthusiasm from the researcher and the process also heavily relies on the richness of the information gathered on the process and the interaction (Nije & Asimiran, 2014). A case study entails an in-depth analysis of an individual case, individual person, or a collective entity such as a community or organization (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Almost any method of data collection and analysis can be used in case study designs, if it entails an intensive investigation that may span over time and includes the combination of multiple methods of data collection (O'Neil & Koekemoer, 2016).

Other qualitative approaches include but are not limited to phenomenological and ethnographic studies. Star (2014) noted that ethnographic research involves observation of a given community or group, with the aim of characterizing the norms, rules, conventions, habits, and beliefs that govern patterns of behavior and interaction of its members. Ethnographic research is not appropriate for this study because I do not seek to explore patterns or behaviors that relate to a culture or group. Researchers use phenomenological research to gain direct insight into individuals lived experiences to make sense of the world and develop a worldview (Al-Busaidi, 2008). This design engages multiple respondents and the outcome is an in-depth description of participants' common experiences, to reveal the essence of these phenomena (O'Neil & Koekemoer, 2016). The phenomenological approach was inappropriate for this study because the purpose of the study is to explore a complex phenomenon exclusive to social work professionals by interviewing persons in leadership positions.

Fusch and Ness (2015) noted that the number of participants does not define data saturation, suggesting that researchers instead focus on the depth of the data receive. Data saturation involves continually bringing new participants into a study until data have become complete (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). Saturation is reached when the researcher has gathered enough data and information to the point of diminishing return at which point nothing more can be added; there are no established guidelines in qualitative research for gauging data saturation (Marshall et al., 2013). To achieve saturation, I continued to interview research participants until now new data were received.

Population and Sampling

The social work agency selected has approximately 75 employees. The participants selected had at least 1 year of leadership experience with social work professionals, knowledge of turnover, and at least 18 years of old. I collected data using interviews with the most senior staff.

Purposeful sampling is a technique used in qualitative research that involves identification and selection of information from individuals that have knowledge about an experience or phenomenon (Palinkas et al., 2013). Purposeful sampling is a nonprobability method used to select participants based on their knowledge of, or experience with, the focus of academic investigation (Robinson, 2014). I selected a purposeful sampling method to allow me to collect data from those who have knowledge about the research topic. Purposeful sampling selects useful samples that allow

researchers to learn about or improve a specific process or system (Perla & Provost, 2012).

Boddy (2016) stated that a sample size of ten may be suitable for sampling within a consistent population. Mason (2010) noted that qualitative samples must be large enough to make certain the perceptions that might be significant are discovered, but not too large that the data become futile and unnecessary. Sampling methods used can provide effectiveness for the quality of data that helps assess usefulness and applicability or the research (Górny & Napierała, 2016). My sample size consisted of 10 managers that had direct knowledge of turnover with social work professionals. I identified participants through use of telephone contact, e-mail, a recruitment letter, and a list of agencies throughout South Carolina.

Ensuring that there is sufficient data is a basis to credible analysis and reporting (Marshall et al., 2013). Data saturation is a concept in which the researcher continues to collect data until no new information is obtained from the completion of interviews or cases (Boddy, 2016). Morse (2015) noted that reaching saturation is not based just on the estimation of sample size it may also include the quality of data, scope of the study, the amount of useful data obtained, and the qualitative method and study design. My goal was to interview at least 8 participants in the study, however, I recruited 2 additional participants to participate in the interviews to ensure no additional new data had emerged.

Privacy is an important when identifying the interview interaction (Mneimneh et al., 2015). Selecting locations are critical for obtaining valuable data. As noted by

Edward and Black (2013), when other people are within hearing distance, this can create a level of tension which may affect the outcome of the information being discussed. The setup should be agreed upon and comfortable to increase the interviewee's cooperation for both initial contact and any follow-on engagements if necessary (McGimsey & Whelan, 2015). When undertaking research in different institutions and organizations, the researcher may be facilitated by the provision of a suitable room or left to take their chances in whatever spaces are available. They advocate that much greater attention should be paid to interview sites, pointing to the importance they have for the research at every level, from research plan and questions, through generation of data, understanding power relations between researcher and researched and gaining insight into the basic questions under study (Edward & Black, 2013).

Ethical Research

In this study, I used the principles outlined in the Belmont Study. I sought approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) before the collection of data. My Walden IRB approval number is 07-12-18-0401545 and expires July 11, 2019. To comply and ensure ethical standards I also used an informed consent form. The informed consent document was identified in the beginning of the study. Informed consent forms provided disclosure regarding the nature of the study so those participating could make knowledgeable decisions regarding potential risk and benefits and choose whether to participate (Partridge & Allman, 2016). Through the informed consent form, participants are notified regarding their right to voluntary withdraw from the research process in which those requests are granted without any repercussions to

those involved (Gordon & Prohaska, 2006). Those who participated in the study were not offered any incentives through compensation or reimbursement. Resnik (2015) stated that research participation should occur under conditions that reduce the possibility for coercion or undue inducement; the use of financial rewards to subjects for their participation could weaken their impartiality.

Ethical protection of study participants is the individual responsibility of the researcher, the aim in conducting research is to minimize harm that is both tangible and intangible (Partridge & Allman, 2016). I used fair subject selection: Emanuel et al. (2016) noted that this is important in both recruitment and selection of research participants. Individuals selected for the study were made aware of the IRB process to give them confidence that they would receive equitable fairly and with dignity throughout the process. Participants were also be made aware of the social value of the research undertaken; research noted that results of a study are made accessible to other researchers as well as the public (Emanuel et al., 2016).

Following Emanuel et al.'s (2016) recommendations data integrity will be maintained through the collection, accuracy of recording, and storage of data. Confidentiality and privacy pertains to information or data retrieved from individuals. To protect prospective participant's rights to confidentiality I protected both their identities and their job descriptions by having sole access to the information. I did not identify participants by their names or any other identifying information; instead they were identified through a coding process. Coding data provide the benefit of reducing

replication and protection of participant's information (Young & Hermann, 2014). Each code definition includes a description of the issue it captured, criteria for code application and any exceptions, and an example of text relevant to the code. To distinguish participant information, participants were identified as P1-P10 to provide confidentiality. While preparing informed consents documents, all these elements were mentioned clearly including protection of privacy and confidentiality for the sake of validity of research (Muthuswamy, 2013). The information retrieved via e-mail, interviews, and documents is securely stored in a locked area. After 5 years, any information pertaining to the research will be destroyed through a process of shredding documents.

Data Collection Instruments

Data collection for qualitative case studies is the first stage of the research process (Rimano et al., 2015). I was the primary data collection instrument in this study. In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument because they make sense of or interpret a phenomenon through the representations of notes, interviews, conversations, recordings, and memo made to self (Ormston, Spencer, Barnard, & Snape, 2014). Interviews facilitate the transfer of lived experience from the interviewee to the interviewer (Brinkmann, 2016). Three types of interviews that are common in qualitative research include structured, semistructured, and narrative (Stuckey, 2013). Semistructured interviews use well-defined questions that produce powerful data with insights into the participants' experiences, perceptions, or opinions (Peters & Halcomb, 2015). In the semistructured interview, to ensure that a broad coverage of issues is achieved the researcher must ask focusing but not leading questions about their situation

and listen carefully to the participants (Fung, Chan, & Chien, 2013). Roberts et al. (2013) suggested that information obtained with semistructured interview questions should be recorded and transcribed to mitigate bias.

Qualitative methods, such as interviews, provide in depth and vast understanding of issues using documented interpretations (Jamshed, 2014). Interviewing is an essential method of gathering data to provide direct responses to a specific research question (Stuckey, 2013). The researcher upholds accountability to recognize changes that occur through investigations that achieve valid interpretations of data (Rosetto, 2014). Interviews are one method by which data saturation may be reached; interview questions should be designed to ask multiple participants the same questions, otherwise one would not be able to achieve data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). To ensure reliability and validity of the study both data triangulation and member checking was used in the process. Hussein (2015) noted that understanding the use triangulation is an important aspect in neutralizing the flaws of the methods to be triangulated increasing the credibility of the research results.

Member checking is a process used as a validation technique (Birt et al., 2016). Member checking involves returning data and results to participants to ensure the accuracy of the research interpretations of their experiences (Birt et al., 2016). Koelsch (2013) suggested that participants should have access to relevant sections of the research in which accuracy of research interpretations can be confirmed. Noble and Smith (2015) noted that detailed records assist in maintaining a clear trail and ensures interpretations of the data are consistent and transparent. I used member checking as a means of verifying

participant's information. Participants were provided with a copy of the interview questions prior to any formal meetings. Upon completion of the interview, participants received transcriptions of the interview for review to ensure reliability and validity, and to avoid any misrepresentations.

Establishing an interview protocol ensures that the interview questions align with the research study (Montoya, 2016). Following an interview protocol interviews provides a suitable structure for both novice and experienced qualitative researchers to follow. Eliciting data grounded on the experience of the participant as well as data guided by existing constructs in the discipline within which one is conducting research (Galletta & Cross, 2013). This iterative process enables the researcher to identifying concepts from data that are used to guide participant recruitment to further explore those concepts in subsequent data collection until theoretical saturation is reached (Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2016). Using the interview protocol (see Appendix A) assisted creating a logical model that would reduce inconsistencies in the data collection process.

Data Collection Technique

In qualitative research researcher uses specific data generated methods to collect information which can include observations, semistructured and in-depth interviews, and focus groups (Ormston et al., 2014). The data collection techniques used for this study will included semistructured in depth interviews related to the research using the interview protocol (see Appendix A). Interviewing is a highly-used method of collecting data in qualitative research; to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee

with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena enabling individuals to think and to talk about their predicaments, needs, expectations, experiences, and understandings (Anyan, 2013). I used a semistructured interview approach with this study. A semistructured interview is a technique for generating qualitative data and is characterized by open-ended questions that are developed in advance and by prepared probes (Fung, et al., 2013). The use of open-ended questions will more likely obtain narrative accounts and give control of information sharing process to the interview (Brown et al., 2013). Interviews were conducted in person at a mutual and specified location prior to occurrence. Klenke (2016) suggested that interviews should be audio recorded, transcribed, and checked for accuracy. Adhering to the interview protocol (see Appendix A) participants were provided relevant information as well as allowing for disclosure to occur through informed consent before any information is obtained.

As the primary instrument in the data collection method there could be both advantages and disadvantages. The first advantage is that interviewers can ask open ended questions that allow participants to express their point of view extensively (Bevan, 2014). Another advantage is that interviewers can listen carefully and ask probing questions which could lead to areas of clarification and elicit additional information (Bevan, 2014). A disadvantage of using interviews as a data collection method is that it may produce informal conversations which may require an increase amount of time to collect information, and require advanced interviewing skills (Brayda & Boyce, 2014).

Pilot or feasibility studies provide the researcher the opportunity to examine the consistency of practices to enhance data integrity and ethical practices (Whitehead, Sully, & Campbell, 2014).). Pilot studies are used to measure and assess the potential for successful implementation of a proposed main intervention in studies (Tickle-Degnen, 2013). Another purpose of a pilot study is to examine the feasibility of both current and future research that will be conducted on a larger scale (Eldridge et al., 2015). Since I underwent an extensive review process through the IRB, I did not conduct a pilot or feasibility study at any point in the research process.

Member checking is a validation technique used for credibility and accuracy of interview interpretations (Birt et al., 2016). The use of member checking provides the researcher the opportunity to follow up by allowing the interviewee to review the write up from the interview (Koelsch, 2013). Thomas (2016) suggested member checking can be useful in obtaining participants approval when using quotations or in case studies where privacy cannot be guaranteed. Bengtsson (2016) purposed that the use of a member check, presents the researcher the ability to achieve agreement in the research findings. I used member checking upon completion of the interviews. Participants were given the opportunity to review transcribed data and identify any inconsistencies.

Data Organization Technique

Tumele (2015) recommended the use of a systematic case study database and the chain of evidence principle. Yin (2013) noted that creating a separate database provides a formal assembly of evidence which contains case study notes, documents and tabular materials, and preliminary data. Anyan (2013) recommended that researchers create a

storage system for interviews, transcriptions, and consent forms; the information should be destroyed based on a specified period. I collected and categorizing data based on (a) participant identification (b) date of data collection, and (c) other information that may be meaningful for analysis. Interview data was labeled according to codes to protect the privacy of research participants.

There are several ways to ensure storage and security of personal data during the research process. A central key to data security is to protect what matters (Roman et al., 2016) To ensure security and trustworthiness of information productive systems can be used for the storage of information (Aieyer et al., 2015). To verify the integrity of data correctly and efficiently and keep the stored file researchers can use password protection, encryption, and storage soundness (Hamlin et al., 2016). Data collected will be maintained for a 5-year period, once that time has been reached the data will be destroyed by deleting any electronic records and shredding any paper documents received.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data originate from description of materials that provide verbatim transcripts from the in-depth interviews (Fung, et al., 2013). Data analysis is based on coding techniques (Dabić & Stojanov, 2014). Data can be analyzed in a more systematic manner if the study is based on theoretical propositions or a conceptual framework (Mayer, 2015). Categorizing or coding in a way to organize and prepare the data and make it usable for the analysis (Graue, 2015). Dabic and Stojanov (2014) noted that specific emphasis should be paid to precision in selecting quotations to ensure that true

matches in coding are recognized by addressing otherwise small coding differences. To code data, the researcher may assume that words textualized in interview transcripts and field notes are not only data but also basic data that can be broken apart and decontextualized by coding (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014). As noted previously, the purpose of the qualitative case study was to explore effective strategies employed by social work professionals to reduce employee turnover, the process of coding and analyzing data was used throughout the study. Heale and Forbes (2013) suggested that triangulation may involve using multiple theories, data sources, or methods to study a single phenomenon. In order to ensure bias is mitigated, I used a methodical triangulation method that involves analyzing data from interviews as well as the retrieval of company documents for further examinations. Methodical triangulation uses two or more sets of data collection using the same methodology (Heale & Forbes, 2013).

Coding data is crucial to assure that observation and resulting conclusion are reliable. The coded data allows the researcher to draw conclusions and present findings (Graue, 2015). Fine and Hancock (2016) proposed the use of such programs offer various ways to annotate, code, and organize fieldwork data (Fine & Hancock, 2016). Following member checking I was able to use 40 word phrases and statements and categorized them based on the findings that addressed the research questions. I was able to turn out 32 phrases and sentences and coded them based on similarities and differences. I organized the phrases into themes. Finally I was able to assess the information and analyzed the data and conclusions that addressed the research

Reliability and Validity

Gottfert (2015) suggested that research is a systematic, objective process, which includes gathering and analyzing valid and reliable empirical data. Valid data captures and answers the posed research question, while reliable data reproduces the same result in every trial, concerned of the researcher (Gottfert, 2015). Researchers use different methods to collect data. The quality of the research approach is critical, the conclusions researchers draw are based on the information they obtain, so it is imperative that the data and techniques are validated (Zohrabi, 2013).

Reliability

One of the main requirements of any research process is the reliability of the data and findings. In qualitative research the reliability of a study involves, consistency, dependability and replication of the results obtained from the research that produces trustworthiness of the findings (Zohrabi, 2013). Reliability assumes results should hold constant if the conditions of the study are held constant, which assumes the thing under study is relatively static (Walby & Luscombe, 2016). Zohrabi (2013) noted to increase the reliability, the research, uses methods of analysis that enhance the phases of the inquiry (Zohrabi, 2013). The use of internal reliability also provides dependability of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data (Zohrabi, 2013).

Dependability involves participants evaluating the findings and the interpretation and recommendations of the study to make sure that they are all supported by the data received from the informants of the study (Anney, 2014). Noble and Smith (2015)

proposed that dependability in qualitative studies involve clearly and accurately presenting participant's perspectives. Triangulation of methods will also improve the dependability of the findings (Mabuza et al., 2014). Mabuza et al. (2016) posited the best way of supporting the dependability of the research is to ensure that the methods are described in sufficient detail that someone could replicate them else and any limitations are discussed. As noted with dependability, I intend on sharing my findings with participants.

Validity

Walby and Luscombe (2016) suggested that trustworthiness, credibility, and transferability are the most suitable criteria for qualitative research. Researchers can use several methods to enhance the validity of the study to include but not limited to data triangulation and member checking. The validation process depends on the effectiveness of data collected; triangulation can increase integrity of research by improving both internal consistency and generalizability (Hussein, 2015). The outcome of triangulation is to leave a more complete understanding of a phenomenon under study and to prevent extreme reliance on a single data collection method or source (Mabuza et al., 2014). The use of triangulation is one method used in providing creditability to the research provided.

Transferability refers to the ability of others to judge whether the findings can be transferred depends on a detailed description of the study setting, the selection of participants and the findings (Mabuza et al., 2014). Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts with other

respondents; the researcher facilitates the transferability (Anney, 2014). An important aspect is that researchers must follow sound methodological practice in qualitative methods (Nelson, 2016). The results of my doctoral study should provide transferability into other frameworks or settings.

Confirmability represents the degree of objectivity of the researcher in data collection and reporting (Mabuza et al., 2014). Confirmability is concerned with the establishment of data and interpretations of the findings that are not fabrications but are clearly derived from the data (Anney, 2014). Anney (2014) note conformability is achieved through an audit trail, reflexivity, and triangulation. The researcher seeks to provide validity by creating an audit trail that shows confirmability of research findings through recorded evidence over time that another individual can logically follow to the conclusions provided (El Hussein et al., 2016). Audit trail offers visible evidence that the researcher did not simply find what he or she set out to find (Anney, 2014). As a method of conformability, I used computer software as a means to validate member checking. I also audited interviews to review accuracy and to ensure that there are no discrepancies.

Credibility is concerned with the validity of the conclusions drawn from the data and how they coincide with the reality of what was reported (Mabuza et al., 2014). Credibility signifies whether the research findings represent plausible information drawn from the participants' original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants' original (Anney, 2014). Qualitative researchers establish consistency of the analysis by implementing the following credibility strategies: reflexivity, triangulation, member checking, and interview technique (Anney, 2014). Reflexivity requires researchers to

acknowledge that their actions and decisions will certainly impact the significance and framework of their investigations (Rodham et al., 2015). Data triangulation involves methods and perspectives to help produce a more comprehensive set of findings (Noble & Smith, 2015). The use of member checking improves the credibility of qualitative research (Thomas, 2016). As a means of establishing credibility, I ensured that participants had the ability to review their responses of the interview questions.

Data saturation occurs in qualitative research when the researcher no longer observes new information and adding more data would be of no further value to the analysis (El Hussein et al., 2016). An important aspect of data saturation is that entrenched in an iterative process, whereby researchers are concurrently sampling, collecting data, and analyzing data (Hennink et al., 2016). The inability to reach data saturation has an effect on the quality of the research conducted and hampers validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015). To achieve data saturation, I continued to interview until no new data was provided in the study.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 contained information about the study implementation to include the roles of the researcher, participants, research methods, design, and the sampling requirements. In this section, I also provided an exchange of ideas about collecting data, including the processes, and analysis. I began Section 3 with a presentation of findings. In Section 3, I also provided information on research recommendations and my thoughts that go before the conclusion of the overall study.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies that social work managers used to reduce turnover. I selected social work managers from an agency in South Carolina that had expertise with plans to reduce turnover. The central research question in this study was: What strategies do social work manager use to reduce turnover? I conducted semistructured in-depth interviews with managers who had spent at least 1 year in a managerial position at the social work agency. I used 7 interview questions to gain an understanding of effective strategies used to reduce turnover. Before the interviews, participants reviewed consent forms, and provided their consent, indicating their willingness to participate by responding to my invitation e-mail. Three themes emerged from semistructured interviews. Based on the data analysis, the results indicated that retention strategies are required for both the sustainability and productivity of the company. The literature review and the conceptual framework of this study showed the alignment of my analysis with interviewee responses.

Presentation of Findings

I conducted semistructured, in-depth interviews to understand what strategies were effective in reducing turnover among social work professionals. To establish a trusting relationship with participants, I communicated the expectations related to the doctoral study openly and in writing to provide participants with and understanding about their role in the research process. I followed the interview protocol outlined (see Appendix A), which provided greetings and an introduction, a description of the

interview and member checking process, and my commitment to uphold confidentiality and the privacy of participants' identifying information. Using semistructured interviews allowed participant's to share their experiences regarding employee turnover with their staff, the impact that it made on the agency, and the strategies leaders developed to change or reduce turnover. The participants revealed their perspectives on the contributions to turnover. I audio-recorded and then transcribed the interviews while also using note-takings during the meeting to record other pertinent information. I employed member checking immediately following the completion of each interview to confirm that my interpretations of participant information were accurate. Researchers that use member checking utilize techniques as a means to engage participants during the data analysis and interpretation process (Iivari, 2018). Member checking enabled me to eliminate and correct any possible misinterpretation of the interview data. Three themes emerged from the data analysis: (a) employee job satisfaction is vital into turnover intentions, (b) positive working environment, and (c) management.

Theme 1: Job Satisfaction was Key to Reducing Turnover

Job satisfaction was key to reducing employee turnover was the first theme that emerged from exploring participants' responses. Job satisfaction is one of the most studied antecedents to turnover intentions among various professionals (Herzberg et al., 1955). P8 indicated that the company leadership team is interested in finding ways to improve the overall functionality of their organization. P8 also stated that leadership understands that one way to make useful improvements is to collect information from the employees who are involved in the day-to-day operations. All of the participants

emphasized the importance of job satisfaction with employees to help reduce turnover.

P1, P3, P4, and P6 articulated that in employee exit interviews that their personnel indicated a lack of fulfillment with the work expectations, which ultimately reduced their overall job satisfaction. Wnuk (2017) suggested that job satisfaction is one of the most commonly discussed phenomena in human resource management and is a critical factor in understanding employee commitment and motivation to quit. The importance of employees' job satisfaction is recognized, and its relation with performance, absenteeism, and turnover has been proven in the field of social work (Berlanda, Pedrazza, Trifiletti, & Fraizzoli, 2017).

P3 stated that leaders hold a great responsibility for increasing overall satisfaction. Some participants (i.e. P1, P3, P4, and P6) noted the importance of company expectations not exceeding what was realistic from employee perspectives. P1 mentioned that some employees who are not satisfied feel that the organization would have to make changes that may be beyond their control for the employees to change their perception of job satisfaction, which is congruent with Herzberg (1966) on addressing motivating factors that create job enrichment. Herzberg suggested that managers have the ability to motivate employees, this is also known as job enrichment, in which employees feel as if they like their work and feel more satisfied (Coetzee & Dyk, 2018).

When asked about strategies used to reduce overall turnover, several participants described ways that leadership could involve employees in decision-making processes that directly affect their job performance (P2, P5, and P8). The use of mentorship became a tool to make employees' jobs more interesting with exposure to higher level

tasks that would become more challenging. The use of this strategy evolved around the attempt to retain high quality employees. Three participants (i.e. P2, P5, and P8) asserted that mentorship is a strategy used to help with both job satisfaction and retention because it reduces repetitive work and also provides opportunities to exercise new skills and tasks associated with their day-to-day activities. P2, P5, and P8's suggestions on strategies used to reduce turnover rates corresponded with Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory. Herzberg et al. (1959) stated that motivational factors implemented through management provided changes for higher levels of achievement and job enhancements. The participants noted that the organization also offers additional support for specific durations of their new employee processes that would help employees become more acclimated with the agency, in addition to having an added layer of support in middle management. P8 stated, "The organization implements lean projects in order to incorporate a vested interest from the top down." P8 also noted,

This strategy allow their employees to pick any particular area within the organization that could be improved, which the employee is then paired in groups and they are allowed to present this information to the leadership team which has the potential of making changes throughout the company.

P1, P2, P5 and P8 maintained that meeting with employees on all levels was an effective method for understanding if employees are engaged and satisfied with their work expectations. P1 stated that "meeting with employees on a regular basis to gather their input creates value and creates a vested interest in the organization; it also gives

employees the opportunity to disclose any professional challenges before turnover become an issue.” In the words of P9:

Communication is a strategy used during the process of meeting with employees.

Allowing employees to express both personal and professional challenges can be a vital tool in understanding whether an employee may have the intent to leave the agency. Whenever possible particularly for employees that play a vital role in the day-to-day operations we would like to do what is possible to help overcome those challenges.

Participant responses showed that leaders are also setting goals to combat turnover with the understanding that if the organization does not foster opportunities for employees to step outside of the box when feasible then they might leave. P9 explained that leaders who set goals and use two-way communication processes can increase job satisfaction while also potentially reducing employee turnover. My analysis of the interview responses revealed that leaders are effective with reducing turnover by being consistent in understanding whether employees are dissatisfied and communicating in a timely manner.

Job satisfaction was often related to employee turnover throughout the interviews. Leaders emphasized that showing interest in employees and inspiring a shared vision was essential in job satisfaction. Berlanda et al. (2017) maintained that job satisfaction affects social workers health, mental health, and social functioning; research has found that social workers with higher overall satisfaction have higher levels or organizational commitment and lower levels of turnover intention related to stress-related issues. The

findings in this study that job satisfaction reduced employee turnover were also comparable to the findings of Basol and Demirkaya (2017) that the satisfaction level of employees is a fundamental factor in their decision to leave their job; high-level job satisfaction does not resolve turnover or its intentions, however, it is likely to help. Wnuk (2017) suggested that supervisors are the critical link in the functioning of subordinates at work, because they create the atmosphere of action, determine relationships with employees, set aims, monitor the performance of tasks, motivate, and evaluate. Communication and engagement appear to have a significant influence on perceived job satisfaction, which ultimately impacts turnover. Othman (2018) agreed with Wnuk by noting when establishments are involved with employee needs, the turnover rate will decrease and at the same time, many loyal employees can be created to help the organization to grow bigger. Cohen et al. (2015) noted that useful management structures that emphasize performance and rewards have a positive impact on reduced turnover; moreover, research has found enhanced job satisfaction, productivity, and retention in the organization's that value employees, which contributes to the overall success of the organization. Based on the interview responses, the various factors that influenced employee job satisfaction included, but were not limited, to compensation or salary, career promotion, working environment, and supervisor support.

I also reviewed organizational documents related to turnover over the last 2 years (i.e., 2016-2018). The findings from my documents review correlated with the information provided through interviews. In the exit interview documents, many of the employees noted that the organization was not a good fit for them based mainly on their

satisfaction with the organization and the leadership they received. Theme 1 relates to motivation-hygiene factors identified by Herzberg and his colleagues. Herzberg et al. (1955) maintained that a negative or positive employee viewpoint affected their overall organizational commitment. All participants (i.e. P1-P10) noted that job satisfaction played a role in employee turnover. The findings from the study also indicated that leaders used various strategies to help employees become engaged in the organization so that they would have a vested interest in the operations. Leaders used job satisfaction as a motivator to help employees envision a future with the organization and appeal to their aspirations. Herzberg (1974) stated that high levels of optimism related to their work, leadership, and organization become motivating factors in employee retention whereas employees with high levels of pessimism can influence longevity and become a precursor to turnover intentions.

Theme 2: Positive Working Environment

The second theme that emerged from the interviews was strategies that created a positive working environment. The key to this theme is that managers emphasize a positive working environment as an intrinsic value by creating something worthwhile to reduce turnover if employees' perceptions of the organizations are good. P1 mentioned that creating a positive work environment between leaders and employees is an effective strategy used to increase employee retention. Solidifying actions and shared values were often obtained by setting the example. A positive work environment involves principles and behaviors that promote respect, trust, dignity, and social inclusion in addition to establishing relationships as patterns of interactions geared toward accomplishing the

goal that is common between both leaders and employees (Sarwar, 2017). P1 explained a particular strategy used with new hires to lay a foundation of a favorable environment:

When employees come to the agency, and within their area they take time to understand the employee on an individual basis; our organization is full of diverse employees, and while we are fair, firm, and consistent as a manager it is more useful for me to understand that everyone works at a different capacity the only way that I will know this is when I take time to understand them where they are.

Maintaining a positive working environment also aligns with Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory. Herzberg (1959) noted that creating conditions in which employees feel respected has positive benefits for the organization as a whole.

P1 commented that leaders have the ability to create and encourage culture for both new and tenured staff. P1's statement coincides with Timms et al.'s (2014) argument that supportive corporate culture demonstrates an enduring effect over time that produces high work engagement and low levels of psychological strain which potentially reduces turnover. Sarwar (2017) proposed a fundamental belief that organizational socialization with newcomers increase the probability they will remain with an organization for some time.

Over half of the participants also noted that a positive working environment is a support system in which leaders encourage engagement. P3 explained that creating a positive working environment is not limited to job satisfaction but understanding employee issues and effective communication. Jnaneswar (2016) suggested that employees identify with organizational cultures that value and support the integration of

work and family lives for women and men. Shier and Graham (2013) noted that many aspects of direct social work practice contribute to practitioner well-being; moreover, creating an encouraging workplace operation plays a role in the quality of service offered in addition to reduced levels of burnout and turnover among human service professionals.

Motivating and encouraging employees was a strategy identified by several participants. P3 noted that specific strategies directly and indirectly impacted what they do to create a positive environment that influences empowerment and retention. P3 claimed that employees have multiple factors in their everyday life outside of what happens within the agency, so when employees are stressed about home and then come to work and face issues with their supervisor most of the time it does not end well because communication may break down which leads to excessive absenteeism and ultimately them leaving the agency we want to avoid that. When organizations empower workers by creating autonomy and positive work environments, the probability increases to induce a state of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact intrinsic motivation to do the task because they enjoy it or develop an interest in the activity (Spivack, & Milosevic, 2018).

P3 explained that employee who feel supported and connected with the organization might produce positive work environment, organization commitment, as well as employee retention. P4 maintained:

I do not try to make personal friendships with my employees however the open door policy is real and confidential because I want employees to feel they can

communicate with me on a professional level and work to resolve issues that they may have or share things that are valuable to the organization.

Herzberg et al. (1959) emphasized the importance of positive relationships between organizations and employees that model appropriate and acceptable behaviors. Overall, participants (P1 -10) emphasized supportive leadership strategies that influenced the ability to communicate in constructive ways with the intent of promoting an encouraging environment and reducing turnover. P3's comments correlated with Geue (2018) position that capturing many of these aspects of positivity is the recent focus on positive practices that are respectful, caring, supportive, inspiring, meaningful, and forgiving.

Positive working environment with leaders included various methods. Positive businesses achieve both higher levels of performance and success by bringing out the best in their employees to help them grow, and by leveraging their unique strengths and talents (Geue, 2018). P6 explained the importance of maintaining an inspiring view with employees. P6 and P10 stated:

During the interview process we look for employees that have the most potential, meaning we look for employees that have the abilities to do everything that we can do as managers. For some, it may sound odd to look for a replacement, but our philosophy is that you never know what opportunities may arise and we always want people to step up to the challenge.

The focus of the strategy for leadership with both P6 and P10 is to foster an environment that will give employees the confidence to perform the task to the best of their abilities with the potential to advance to other possibilities in the agency.

P5 expressed that a strategy used in inspiring employees includes finding commonalities in ideals, something that is often needed to create strong feelings and personal effectiveness. Research studies indicate organizations that create favorable reputations become more attractive and increase the satisfaction of current and potential employees to remain working with the organization (Makarius, Stevens, & Tenhiälä, 2017). P7 commented that a strategy used for creating a positive working environment was to show employees that they have pride in the organization, it helps employees understand that ethical behavior is essential as well as teamwork in facilitating the outcomes of the organizational goals. A positive work environment creates an emotional climate that enlarges and build on the potential to perceive, think, and broaden social inclusion (Geue, 2018). P2 stated that it is essential for leaders to be purposeful and appreciative to those employees who are willing to take risk and sacrifice so that they can learn from their mistakes without anticipating fear that their employment will be jeopardized if things do not always turn out the way they expected. With doing that employees develop optimism and are more willing to improve what they do and challenge themselves to make processes better (P2).

All of the 10 managers referenced employees perceptions of a positive working environment as well as the relationship of their immediate supervisor impacts the longevity with the agency. Geue (2018) noted that a positive work environment is measured by the enacted values of openness, friendship, collaboration, encouragement, personal freedom, and trust that enhance effect and well-being. Findings from research suggest a supportive workplace environment increases the likelihood that employees will

feel comfortable without worrying about negative career consequences (Ko, Hur, & Smith-Walter, 2013). Sarwar (2017) proposed that workers are distinctive in how long they expect to stay with a firm, regardless of their clear responsibilities, employees learn and adapt to their organizations, jobs, and social environments, based on the experience. Coetzee (2018) maintained that modern day career development is vital with maintaining employee stability, employees' have choices that encompass a path that could include voluntarily committing to an organization or exploring horizontal and vertical trajectories that reflect more stability.

The element of positive work environment fits with Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory with that leaders seek to understand those factors that could reduce employees from becoming psychologically withdrawn from their job to promote success business operations. Employees have a strong desire to build relationships within the organization that form both a positive image and working environment thus decreasing the loss of knowledgeable and talented employees. Employee perceptions of the organization have found to be strong predictors of work-related outcomes such as job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and organizational commitment (Van den Heuvel, Schalk, & van Assen, 2015). Van den Heuvel et al. (2015) conducted a study between positive change and psychological effects of employees. Van den Heuvel et al. concluded that those employees who have negative perceptions of the organization directly impact trust with creating rumors and uncertainty that are more likely to result in turnover. Positive working environments along with work-life balance is supported recent academic literature. Positive work engagement promotes a connection with

employees and their jobs; when employees are engaged they demonstrate higher levels of passion and excitement which lowers turnover intentions (Coetzee & Dyk, 2018).

Theme 3: Management

The third theme that emerged from the interviews included management and leadership. Overall, interviewee responses indicate that leadership and management had a direct impact on turnover. Teoh et al. (2016) maintain that people leave managers, not organizations. P6 emphasized the importance of adopting the right attitude which becomes an ongoing process that supports and accomplishes the strategic goals of the organization. P6 believed “being fair-minded is something that employees look for; many of the employees want to know that you will be open-minded when handling issues that directly impact them and the organization.” Zhou and Li (2018) suggested that leaders who exercise humility with employees and the decision making process are able to appreciate their employees while recognizing their limitations that will produce a positive emotional engagement thus reducing the desire for employees to leave the organization.

P10 emphasized being “straightforward” is another strategy when addressing turnover; it helps to be forthright; employees want to know that you are honest about what you do which can have a positive impact on turnover. Herzberg et al. (1959) concluded that unfavorable judgments about supervision influenced weaker job performance, while relationships with leadership enhanced job satisfaction and lowered turnover intentions. P3 maintained that employees look at leaders as having the expertise in that area and they want to be inspired that the work they do has a benefit. Many times

when employees cannot they cannot make an influence, they are very likely to look for other alternatives. Although organizational withdrawal is a personal decision affected by socio-psychological considerations and each person's own unique circumstances, employee retention, recruitment, and training are strategic human resource management functions necessarily administered at the organizational level (Cohen et al., 2016). The success of virtually any organization depends upon its employees, perhaps even more so in the human service fields; furthermore agencies often invest a lot of resources in recruitment efforts to attract a diversity of qualified applicants (Wareham et al., 2013).

P1 explained that organizational leaders could reduce their turnover by soliciting feedback from the top, middle, and bottom. The only real way to understand is to find out what things are negatively impacting both the employees and the agency and work to change those issues. When employees provide you with valuable feedback, it is important not to hold on to it, but change happens when you can do something with it and follow through with communication whether the feedback works or if it does not. P1 emphasized effective communication can improve relationships and processes related to turnover. The ability for leaders to maintain consistent communication is vital to sustainability to achieve optimal effectiveness and efficiency within the organization (P1).

P4 explained that some supervisor handle issues differently, however it is critical that leaders follow organizational policies and procedures. P2 maintained that leaders should have a transparent process of how to address turnover or handle employee issues that undermine the credibility of the organization; if employees do not see a forward-

thinking process on how to address issues many times they will consider looking for another job. P5 noted that when employees do not perceive leaders to address issues explicitly, it can make them feel as if they are not supported and often underappreciated. P1, P4, P6, and P10 contend organizational leaders should have strategies in common to combat the lack of transparent processes. Herzberg et al. (1959) noted that leaders should promote policies that are equitable and consistent that emphasize what the job expectations encompass. P3 indicated that there are always going to be barriers that try to impede the success of the organization. However, it is critical that employees feel as if they are capable; employees should not feel powerless with being caught in the middle of policies and procedures. It is our job as leaders to enable them to perform at their best levels. Both practitioners and researchers have endorsed the use of a variety of human resource policies and approaches to effectively manage retention (Wilson & Chaudhry, 2017). The result of ineffectively addressing turnover includes the loss of expertise to the agency, decreased social networks and contacts, increased use of inexperienced and tired staff, insufficient staffing, and reduced morale (Wareham et al., 2013).

Turnover is not always directly correlated with one particular factor. According to Herzberg (1959), an employee attitudes impacted their job performance based on how they viewed different elements, particularly supervision. According to Herzberg (1974), employees often have problems with expressing what they want from a job. Therefore, leaders can easily ignore what individuals need to be successful and instead advise employees of what they want. Interpersonal relationships are motivating factors on individual functioning; specifically to the workplace one of the most important

relationships are those that employees have with their immediate supervisor (Saleem et al., 2018). Employees commonly cite their managers' behavior as the primary reason for quitting their jobs (Reina et al., 2018).

Application for Professional Practice

I used Herzberg motivation-hygiene theory to explain factors that motivate job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The specific business problem is that some social work leaders lack strategies to reduce employee turnover. Organizations are increasingly finding themselves in competitive environments; turnover is highly disruptive and results in costly consequences (Chen et al., 2015). The results of undesired and preventable worker turnover, such as when an active employee voluntarily leaves his or her job, has negative impacts both the clients and practitioners physical and emotional well-being (Auerbach et al., 2013). High levels of turnover can also trigger turnover among the remaining employees (Wareham et al., 2013). Researchers suggest that leaders are perceived as central representatives of the organization when they positively communicate with subordinates about its goals and values or express attitudes that value the organization (Vandenberghe, Bentein, & Panaccio, 2014).

Business leaders can use employee engagement strategies as a tool to mitigate employee turnover (Reina et al., 2017). Most leaders understand and are aware of the impact that turnover has on the organization. While there are some strategies that managers' use to positively impact retention, participants stated that job satisfaction, positive working environment, and transparency with management are strategies used to lessen turnover. Acknowledging effective retention strategies benefits the organization

financially with protecting the valuable time and money that would be expended on finding a replacement. More importantly, social work leaders can use the findings of the study to revisit retention strategies that are beneficial for both the agencies but also the clients and communities that they serve. The information shared by the researcher participants is valuable to the profession, leadership, and other employees. My goal from the research findings was to provide some insight on while the field of social work continues to expand the need still remains to retain employees that provide exceptional knowledge management with strategies that reduce turnover in the profession.

Implications for Social Change

The qualitative case study on employee turnover is meaningful for social change because social work leaders can use the finding with retention strategies that will be effective in reducing turnover. The results of this study may help business leaders in various industries specifically social work practitioners. There are nearly 600,000 social workers in the United States, and this number is expected to grow by 19% by the year 2022, which is faster than the average growth rate of 11% for all occupations (Bloomquist, Wood, Friedmeyer-Trainor, & Kim, 2016). With the rapid technological advancement, financial meltdowns, and flattened hierarchies, employee organization relationships have produced substantial changes (Chen et al., 2015). The study of leadership strategies used to reduce turnover in social work professionals is essential; national studies indicate it takes approximately 2 years to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to become a competent and independent child welfare practitioner (Auerbach, Schudrich, Lawrence, Claiborne, & McGowan, 2013). Social work leaders

may influence their organization and enhance their reputation so that practitioners will see their organization as the best place to work because they empower others to act and encourage the heart.

Recommendations for Action

The results of this study are beneficial to leaders in the social work profession. Leaders in the social work profession should use the results of this study to evaluate the impact of turnover on both employees and clients. In general, leadership should consider, the totality of turnover and ways to create job satisfaction, positive working environments, and managerial approaches to address or reduce turnover.

Participants identified three themes (a) job satisfaction, (b) positive working environment and (c) management as strategies that could be helpful in reducing employee turnover. To foster an environment that creates job satisfaction leaders provided mentorship created to improve job performance and the overall functionality of the organization. Leaders can exhibit behaviors that will model the way for employees to promote healthy working relationships that increase teamwork and compliment the overall morale of the employees. The results from the study apply to leadership at all levels. By implementing strategies to reduce turnover leaders can maintain the talent and knowledge management that will sustain their organizations.

To promote distribution of the findings of this study, circulation will occur with several methods. Leaders from the partner organization will receive a 2 page summary of the result to share with their peers and colleagues. The study will also be available through the university authorized database for information about dissertations and

master's theses. I am also seeking other opportunities to share the finding of the study that includes but are not limited to business-related forums, training, and conferences.

Recommendations for Future Research

The research was intended to provide strategies that social work leaders used to reduce turnover. Three limitations were noted in Section 1. The main limitations was the study only included participants in South Carolina, the sample size included 10 participants, and the leadership was specific to the social work profession. Further research should be expanded to seek beyond the limitations. Researchers should try to explore strategies to reduce turnover in social work professions across the United States, in addition to understanding the impact in another part of the world. Since the study was limited to social work professionals in general researchers should conduct studies specific to occupations under social work specifically to child welfare, adult protection services, and economic services. Future research should be performed with a broader spectrum of participants. Also, future researchers could benefit from gaining further insight from different perspectives to include but not limited to gender, race, physical, and mental disabilities.

Researchers should look at other empirical conclusions to see if there are any common themes among the profession. Finally, researchers should use both quantitative and mixed method studies to examine the relationship between turnover and the common themes that are represented. Moreover, researchers should look for relationships among job satisfaction, positive working environments, and approaches to reduce turnover among social work professionals.

Reflections

My journey in the DBA doctoral process was complicated, interesting, and worthwhile. I would have never thought that I would ever make it to this point one day. Ultimately something that started as a figment of my imagination became a reality. I always thought a doctoral program was for other people and not for me. However, this process has bought out another level of confidence that I had in both myself and also what I am continuously working to achieve. This process has extended beyond who I am, and I can honestly tell people that they can accomplish whatever they set their mind with consistency, sacrifice and the ability to put in the hard work.

Additionally, completing the program has helped me become a better writer, researcher, and learner. I have had the opportunity to work with my mentor Dr. Velkova who inspired and pushed me to do better. More importantly, I have had the chance to understand the impact of how turnover affects the social work profession.

When I began the process of research, I had a limited view of employee turnover as well as leadership roles. I had a more significant concern for the client impact and not so much the organizational perspective. I honestly thought that leadership had an intentional role in who stayed and who left the organization. I have since realized that turnover has both direct and indirect impacts on the organization as well as the communities in which they serve. The data collected throughout my researcher helped with shifting such biases. I have since realized that both employees and leaders play a huge role in the outcome of an organizations success. Finally, I realized that social work is not a profession that people into to get rich the reward process comes with helping

someone improve their overall life functioning, so it is with great importance that organizations understand and intervene whenever possible to promote effective retention strategies.

Conclusions

The purpose of the qualitative case study was to explore strategies social work leaders used to reduce turnover. I conducted semistructured interviews with social work leaders in the area of South Carolina. In this study, I identified the following themes: job satisfaction, positive working environment, and management. The themes align with my conceptual framework and have implications for social change, future research, and professional practices. Acquired from the findings is the suggestion that employees with job satisfaction, positive working environment, and management leadership can address turnover which is significant for social work leaders to improve employee retention thus creating a benefit for both the organization and the communities in which they serve.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Interview: Effective strategies social work leaders use to reduce turnover in South Carolina.

- I. The interview session will begin with a basic introduction, followed by an opening statement with an overview of the research topic.
- II. I will express my gratitude to the participants for volunteering to participate in the study.
- III. I will also review the process of consent as well as providing participants with a hard copy of the form for their records.
- IV. The interview participants will be coded in sequence of “Participants 1 through 10”. I will also use a recording device which will limit the number of notes to maintain eye contact and active listening throughout the interview.
- V. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes to ask all research questions and allot time for follow up questions.
- VI. When the interview is complete, participants will be notified of the transcription process and the expectation to verify interpretations.
- VII. At the conclusion I will extend final thanks for participation in the study.